

## **Hardware by creeper425**

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Action Movie, BAMF Mike Wheeler, Badasses doing badass things, Cyberpunk, F/M, Gen

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**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Martin Brenner, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Dustin Henderson/Suzie, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Mike Wheeler

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**Summary:**

15 years after El is taken by the government, Mike Wheeler is being hunted by a terrifying cyborg. Chased by deadly mercenaries, Mike must outwit his pursuers and discover the mystery of the cyborg hunting him as well as unravel the conspiracy that threatens the world.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

I have been working on this idea for a few months now, and hopefully you all enjoy what I consider a good action story

*September 27, 1986*

The Party was sitting by Hopper's lake the day the world ended. It was a peaceful end of summer type of day where it wasn't too hot and the leaves were not ready to fall yet. Max Mayfield was shooting cans with her own wrist rocket while Lucas was gently instructing her. Dustin was repairing his radio after a mishap with Will and a slingshot lesson. Will had an art book and was drawing nature, and his best friend and step sister. El was sitting down with her boyfriend, Mike. The two were snuggled together, Mike writing in his notebook campaign ideas while El read over his shoulder.

Mike looked over his shoulder and smiled at his girlfriend reading over his shoulder. He quickly kissed her cheek. She smiled and began stroking his hair. The pair looked out to their friends and smiled. The past few years had been a challenge with the threat of the Upside Down finally ending. Now they just had to worry about teenage hormones and homework.

"Hey, Mike, if you and El can stop being disgustingly adorable, you think your going to have that campaign ready be next week?" Dustin called while putting knobs in place. "Yea, it should be ready. Just fine tuning a few things" Mike said. "And I'm helping!" El said excitedly.

"Make out sessions are not help." Max said with a laugh. She fired her rock at the can but it diverted away, Max looked over to see El wiping her nose. "Oh you bitch." Max said as El gave her a shit eating grin.

Dustin kept messing with the knobs in his radio. A signal came in.

"We found the subject, preparing for extract." A voice came in over the radio.

Everyone stared at the radio as the voice came in, they all turned over to Mike. "We need to get to get to Hop." Mike said. They gathered their things and bolted away from the shore.

The group ran, then split off in multiple directions. Will and Dustin went one way, Lucas and Max another. Mike and El made a beeline for the cabin. They could hear people coming from behind trees. El used her powers and flung them out of their way.

Mike held onto El's hand as they saw the cabin in sight. They rushed forward to the cabin. They had prepared for this, Mike and El had a couple of backpacks with supplies so they could go on the run if the government returned. El used her powers and unlocked the door. They reached the door and pulled it open, coming face to face with Martin Brenner.

The pair stepped back as Brenner's smiling face stepped out of the doorway. Behind him, a soldier came out with Joyce and Hopper handcuffed. The soldier threw them to the ground and trained a pistol on them.

"Don't try anything else. I hate to cause anymore pain today," Brenner said. He then delivered a swift kick to Hopper's side. El glared at him. "Leave them alone you bastard." El said. Brenner seemed to smile wider.

"You have a lot of nerve showing your shit eating face again." Mike snarled. Brenner began laughing, especially when his men came in dragging the rest of the Party. "I forgot how much spirit youth had." Brenner said approaching El and Mike.

Brenner pulled a paper from his suit and handed it to El. "This is what makes what I do legal." Brenner said. El snatched the paper from his hand and both Mike and El read it.

It was an order from the President to retrieve subject Eleven by any means necessary. The US Government had just declared her as property. Mike was seething with rage. Brenner continued to smile.

"I showed you that, so you know the steps I will take if you don't come willingly. I will execute each of these people, starting with this surrogate mother of yours." Brenner said kicking Joyce in the side. "You wouldn't be so smug if I wasn't handcuffed." Joyce snarled.

"If you keep defying me, well, look up." Brenner said. They both looked to the skies and saw it, a plane circling Hawkins. "That plane has a massive payload that I will authorize to wipe out this ignorant little town." Brenner said, his smile now becoming more feral.

Tears welled in El's eyes as she saw these men were ready to kill innocents, just to get her back. She lowered her head and faced Mike.

"No, this isn't fair." Mike said, tears coming down his own face. El pulled Mike into a hug. He held her for dear life, wishing he could take her far away from this nightmare.

"It's ok Mike. I'll be fine. I won't let others die for me. I can live knowing you all are safe." She said. Mike looked down at her and with his courage waning, delivered a deep passionate kiss to her. When they broke apart, El reached for her necklace, a charm Mike had gotten her for Valentine's Day, and handed it to him. "I love you El. I will always love you." Mike said. She smiled sadly. "I love you too." She said. She then walked over to Hopper and Joyce. Using her powers, she set them up. Brenner motioned for his men to stand at ease. He knew he had won.

"El, please no. You can't go." Hopper said, tears of his own falling down his face. El was still crying, as she pulled her dad into a hug. "I have to Dad. I can't let you all get hurt. Not for me." She said. "Sweetie, we would gladly sacrifice more for you. We just don't want you to go," Joyce said. El looked to her mother and pulled her into a hug as well. "I won't forget you." She said.

She turned to Brenner, despite still crying she faced him. "You leave them alone. You stay way from them." She said. Brenner nodded, "They were expendable, no need to worry about them," Brenner said.

A soldier came to El and placed a bag over her head and led her away. Once she was in a vehicle, the car left. Brenner then walked up to Mike and placed a hand on his shoulder. "No hard feelings huh?"

He said.

Mike punched Brenner square in the jaw. He fell back in surprise. He then began laughing. "Oh you have spunk all right." He said picking himself up. "Here is the rules now. You will all be watched. If you think about coming after me, or try to retrieve Subject Eleven, I will kill her. If she tries to escape, I will kill you all and then I may just sterilize this town off the face of the earth. Am I understood?" Brenner said with a snarl. Mike gave him a curt nod. "And now, it's over. Go about your lives. Pretend she never existed. Because as of now, Jane Hopper is gone." He said. He gathered his men and they left. Will and Dustin ran to Hopper and Joyce and began uncuffing them. Joyce gripped onto Hopper, sobbing uncontrollably with him as their daughter was taken.

Mike knelt to the ground. His entire world just ended. Max was sobbing into Lucas, who was also letting tears fall freely. Will was pulled into the hug with Joyce and Hopper. Dustin walked over to Mike and knelt with him. None spoke as they cried. Mike looked to the retreating cars. Brenner was going to pay for this. One day he would.

*15 years later- July 15<sup>th</sup> 2001*

The alarm woke Mike from his sleep. He looked around, bleary eyed and confused. When he realized he was in his apartment in Indianapolis, he centered himself. It was the dream again. The day he lost the first love of his life. Mike gets out of bed and begins doing his morning workout. 100 pushups, 100 sit ups, and a few sets on his weight equipment.

After that fateful day, Mike declared he would not be helpless again. He started paying more attention in gym class. Hopper taught him how to work out and Virgil Sinclair taught him and the rest of the Party how to fight. Over time, his friends had given up with workouts but Mike kept them up, mostly now out of habit.

He took martial arts in collage, where he majored in computer science and minored in English literature. Now he worked at a tech firm, keeping busy most days as they developed new software. Mike though, kept a few other skills fresh. His collage roommate taught

him how to hack, a skill that Mike used occasionally to look into Martin Brenner's activities. Not that he needed to anymore. One day on the news he saw the smug bastard in a confirmation hearing as Secretary of Energy. Mike felt sick seeing his nemesis get put in a high office in government.

Mike tried not to think too much about how things have gone. He steps into the shower after his workout and cleans off the sweat from his workout. Mike got out of the shower and saw a voicemail on his answering machine. He hit the button and the automatic voice said he had one new message.

"Hey Mike, call me back ASAP. I need to talk to you about Harrison this weekend." Max said. Mike grabbed the phone and dialed her number.

"Hey asshole, why didn't you pick up?" Max asked. She said it with affection, or at least as much affection as she could, considering their history.

"Sorry, I was in the shower. What's going on with Harrison?" Mike asked. Harrison was his son with Max, during their brief relationship four years ago. They both considered it a nice distraction. And Mike loved his son to death. He helped Mike forget about his heartache because Harrison was born out of love. Even if they both were together after Lucas and Max broke up for the thousandth time. But during that brief relationship, Mike realized that while he loved Max, he didn't *Love* her. The feeling was mutual and they shared custody of their three year old.

"Look, I know it's your weekend with him, but mom wants to take Harrison for the weekend. She never gets to do grandma things since Billy moved back to California." Max said. Mike groaned. He loved Susan to death, ever since she divorced that scumbag Neil Hargrove she was practically a third mom. But she also really loves being a grandma and when Billy took his family back to California she started wanting to spend more time with Harrison. Luckily it usually once a month. "Ok, fine. But I want him next weekend." Mike said. Max laughed. "Hey, for this, you can keep him for two weeks." Max said. That perked him up.

"That sounds like a great idea. Thank you." Mike said. "No doofus, thank you. Mom really appreciates this." She said.

"All right, well I gotta get ready for work, talk later." Mike said. Max said her own good byes and hung up the phone.

Mike put on a dress shirt and black slacks as his coffee brewed. He was finishing putting on his shoes when a knock came to his door. Curious, Mike opened the door and saw a strange sight.

It was dressed in a black trench coat, wearing what seemed to be a motorcycle helmet with no visor. The face on the helmet was cold and black. It was maybe 5'4" to Mike's 6'2". Mike looked warily at the new figure

"Michael Wheeler?" A digitized voice asked. "Yea, that's me, what do you want?" He asked.

The figure in black surprised him by delivering a powerful kick into Mike and sent him backwards. Mike fell to the floor as the black figure strode into the apartment. Mike got up and dodged a punch from the figure. Mike then delivered a punch of his own into the helmet. It hurt his hand with how tough it was. The figure grabbed his arm and flung him onto his kitchen table. Mike was hurting as the figure grabbed a knife from his kitchen counter.

The figure was about to deliver a stab into Mie but he rolled out of the way and kicked the figure in the head, knocking it off balance. Mike jumped up, grabbed his coffee pot and smashed the pot into the figure's head. He then grabbed the figure and punched it in the stomach. It recoiled but then grabbed Mike by his shirt and hoisted him up. The figure was about to stab Mike when it seemed to be looking at something. Using the knife, the figure checked the waffle charm that Mike wore around his neck. It stared for a long moment before dropping Mike on the floor. It began shaking, and let out an ear piercing scream. Mike's windows blew out and the figure fell to its knees, not moving.

Mike took this as an advantage and rushed out of the apartment. He must have been hallucinating when he thought he heard a small voice, "Mike?" It said. Mike looked around and just saw the black

figure. He then ran to the garage.

It was a short elevator ride to the parking garage, and he began walking to his Mercury Grand Marquis. It was a tank of a car that he got last year. He got into his car and started it. He then began driving, heading down the five floors quickly. As he reached the bottom floor, several men in suits got his attention. These were government agents. He hit the gas and accelerated quickly.

Two SUV's tried to block his exit, but he managed to get away with just a scrape at his passenger side. He made it out of the garage and floored it out to the street. In his rearview mirror, he sees a man step out and give him a two finger salute.

### *Bravo Company*

The leader known as Jericho saluted his prey. He was amused by the spunk he showed. His second in command, a muscular Hispanic man named Lopez approached him. "Get the helicopter ready, track him. And find out why the asset didn't eliminate him." Jericho ordered. Jericho was a slimmer man to Lopez, but no less dangerous. He wore a simple suit with a black tie, his .45 tucked into his shoulder holster. His men dressed similarly, to blend in and to appear to be federal agents when in reality they were an elite mercenary unit. Jericho went to one of his vans and pulled the door open, a german man with wild hair was looking at monitors. "Your bucket of bolts failed. You said that thing was field certified." Jericho said simply. The man, Doctor Hans Strauss, looked up from his monitors and fixed a glare to Jericho.

"It was field tested. But even advanced technology still has glitches." He said getting out of his chair. The pair walked to the elevator and headed to the fifth floor apartment. Inside, they saw the asset kneeling on the ground, unmoving.

"So Doc, what happened?" Jericho asked. Strauss shrugged his shoulders. "My hypothesis is only rudimentary but it seems it had a sensory overload." Strauss said as he began working on the helmet.

"Ok, keep it away from coffee, got it." Jericho said motioning to the coffee on the floor. He looked at the photos on a mantle. He was

slightly surprised his quarry was a nerd. Lots of pictures of him and his friends throughout the years. One that stood out was a younger version of him in 1984 at something called the Snow Ball. The girl with him doesn't seem to be in the later pictures. "Must have been some woman." Jericho said.

The phone rings and Jericho answers it, just to be polite. "Is it done?" The cold voice on the other end asks. Shit, its their client. "No, he got away, your secret weapon blew a fuse and somehow this nerd can drive a car really well. But we'll catch him," Jericho says.

"Good, catch him alive and let the asset finish him. Do that and I will triple your salary," He said. Jericho let out a low whistle, that was a lot of money. "What did this guy do to deserve this level of work?" He asks,

"That's classified. I am paying you to track, not ask questions. Now get back to work." He said slamming his receiver down. Lopez had entered the room with Nicholi and Smiley, two more members of his squad.

He looked at his men and the mad scientist working on the asset. "Ok, new plan. Smiley, get me all the intel you can on Michael Wheeler. His friends, his family, his likes, his dislikes. I want it all." He says. Smiley nods and heads out. "Did the chopper find him?" He asks. Nicholi nods. "Good, you get the others, we are going to catch him." Jericho says. "Who was that on the phone?" Lopez asks,

"Our employer, The Secretary of Energy. Dr. Martin Brenner."

## 2. chapter 2

### Notes for the Chapter:

Ok, i am glad to keep this going. I am going to try and update this every other week. I have another project I am working on and will work on that next weekend. I am kind of blown away by the support i got for this story and can't wait to show you all how the story will go.

Mike drove, keeping himself at the speed limit. He remembered when Steve taught him how to drive. His dad hadn't been interested in showing him and Nancy had moved to New York, so Officer Harrington showed him how

### *Hawkins 1988*

"Ok Tallest shithead, ease up on the gas." Steve said as he let Mike drive his BMW. Mike was still slightly nervous to be driving Steve's car. But he was tired of biking. Sure it was great exercise, but on top of his other "studies" he really wanted to make things convenient for himself

"So, what if I wanted to evade someone?" Mike asked. Steve briefly chocked on his coffee. "You what?" He asked. Mike shrugged. He still held hope he would find El and bring her home. Steve grimaced at the thought, he beat himself up for not being there. Hopper assured him that there was nothing that could be done, but those were his shitheads and he wasn't there for them. "Well, for starters, don't drive like a maniac, drive quickly but look like your just in a hurry." Steve explained.

Mike took those lessons well. Mike was determined then.

### *The present*

Mike pulled into the parking lot for the Alexander Hotel. He looked up and saw their was a helicopter in the air. "Damnit. I need to get out of sight." Mike said to himself. He quickly ducked into the hotel

lobby.

He decided he needed a way to hide. He saw several bellhops and got an idea.

### *Jericho*

He sat in the back of the RV and began looking over his gear. “What is the situation?” He heard Lopez talking to the helicopter pilot. “He ran into the Alexander Hotel. He might be trying to lose us in their” He said.

Kid was smart, Jericho thought. Jericho put down his rifle and grabbed a .45. “Leave the rifles, we keep pretending we are feds.” Jericho said. His men nodded at him. He put the .45 in his shoulder holster and put his .44 magnum in his rear holster. He put his blazer back on and readjusted his hated tie. He preferred his BDU’s but for now this will have to do.

### *Mike*

Getting into the employee changing room was child’s play. Mike quickly put on a bellhop uniform and began doing work.

“I never seen you here before.” The front desk woman asked. She was an older woman in her forties. Black hair and a severe look on her face. “I’m new, just started today.” Mike said and gave her a smile. She glared at him, but pointed to a family. “Take their bags to room 214.” She said. Mike gave her a small salute and went to the guests. They looked positively bored and Mike tried to keep the smile going as he grabbed their bags, which were heavier than he was used to. He guided them to the elevator, hoping his memory of the place from four years ago holds up.

As he entered the elevator with the small family, he caught a glimpse of several new arrivals. One was the man he saw saluting him as he escaped the parking garage.

### *Jericho*

The group entered the lobby, Jericho heading for the front desk. The severe woman with dark hair gave him a slight smile. “May I help

you?” She said. Jericho gave her a half smile, before pulling out a photo of Michael that he had. “I am looking for this man, he may be inside this hotel.” He said. The woman looked at the photo. She recognized him as the new bellhop. She looked at the man, he didn’t look at all like a cop. He didn’t even present a badge. The kid was hiding and these men were obviously criminals.

“Sorry, I haven’t seen him.” She said flatly. Jericho made a grimace. “Well, can I see your security footage?” He asked. She fixed him with a stare. “Only hotel management can authorize that with a search warrant.” She said. She saw through him. Jericho gave her a smile and walked away. He made his way to Lopez

“Spread out and find him. He is not leaving here.” Jericho said.

### *Mike*

After taking the family to their rooms, and getting a nice \$20 tip, Mike snuck over to the server room that was located in the basement. He carefully moved through the hallways, checking for signs of the room he needed while also hoping to avoid the agents that had him cornered.

He walked into the server room and found his way to the remote feed of the security cameras. He grabbed a blank CD from one of the shelves and found the image of the man. He was at the front desk and was shot down by the front desk lady. Mike smiled to himself as he loaded the footage onto the CD and placed it into a case. He needed to get out of the building and quick. An idea comes to Mike and he smiles. Mike heads over to a nearby office and dials a number. “911 What is your emergency?” the dispatcher says.

“Yes, there are several armed men in the hotel Alexander lobby. They don’t seem to be cops.” Mike said.

### *Jericho*

He noticed the cops, and he rolled his eyes. They were spread around, hoping Michal would show up and they could subdue him but he guessed the kid had a few tricks. One cop walked up to him, looking very stern.

"Excuse me sir, we have a report of a gentleman with your description walking around here armed." He said. Jericho nodded. "Yea, I have a piece. I thought I was allowed to carry." Jericho said. The cop shook his head. "No sir, you can't have guns on these premises. Not unless you are law enforcement." He said. Jericho grumbled, if he tried a fake badge it would be recognized and he would be arrested. "Just take your weapon to your vehicle and you can return." The cop said. Jericho nodded and motioned for his men to follow.

As they walked to their cars, Jericho heard an alarm go off. The group turned and saw the fire alarm system had gone off. Jericho smirked, the cops were going to have a problem getting the crowd under control.

"The kid thinks he can slip out. Go in their and bring that little shit out." Jericho ordered. His men nodded. "I also don't care what condition he is in," He said. His men smiled and rushed in, silently blending with the crowd.

### *Mike*

To keep things authentic, Mike did start a few fires down in the basement. Small trashcan fires. Mike then headed to the lobby, hoping to blend in with the crowd and escape. He was almost at the stairs when he saw a pair of men come from the same stairs he was going to use. Both men were wearing black suits. One was a Hispanic man and the other a white man. Mike ducked back into the server room.

The white guy entered the server room, he pulled out his pistol from his shoulder holster and began doing his sweeps. Mike needed to take him out. He ducked around and found some thick cables. He grabbed a handful and snuck around. The man searched around, occasionally looking between the server stacks. While he was walking between two server towers when Mike struck. He lashed at his gun arm with the thick cables and knocked the weapon out of his hand.

The man was surprised, then Mike punched him in the face with a fist wrapped in the thick cables. Before he could react again, Mike knocked him off his feet with a leg sweep then delivered another

punch to the face, knocking him out.

Mike searched the man and found some zip ties in his pocket. He dragged him into a closet, tied his wrists and stuffed him inside. Mike left the room, holding a serving tray. He had a few ready made excuses for why he didn't leave when the fire alarm came on.

Mike looked outside the server room area and couldn't find the other one. It was fine by Mike since the basement was large. He walked quickly to the stairs when someone came out behind him.

"Hey man, what are you doing here? There's an evacuation." A man with a Spanish accent said behind him. Mike turned around, about to tell him he thought it was a prank. The man looked at him and Mike realized he was made. The man pulled his gun out and Mike threw the serving tray at him. It knocked the gun out of his hand and gave Mike the chance to close the distance.

Mike tackled the man, lifted him up and slammed him to the ground. The move shocked the man, but he regained his composure and got back up.

"Pretty good man. But I'm better." He said pulling a knife out. Mike's eyes went wide, he hated knives. The man came at him and slashed at Mike. He backed away and grabbed his wrist. He then pulled the attacker toward him, shaking his balance and punched the side of his face. While he was dazed, Mike punched his wrist and knocked the knife from his hand.

Mike shoved the man back and kicked him hard. It seemed to daze him and Mike decided to make a break for it. Whatever daze came over the other man was temporary as he ran after Mike. He caught up to him and grabbed Mike by the back of his hair and slammed him to the ground. He delivered a powerful kick to Mike's side. He groaned in pain as the man delivered another kick.

"Yea, thought you were tough, but I guess you were just another punk." The man said. Mike snarled. When the man tried to kick him again, Mike grabbed his leg, and rolled away, taking him down. Mike got up and lunged at him. He delivered a series of blows to the man's face. When he felt he was dazed enough, Mike pulled a pair of zip

ties from his pocket and tied his wrists. He then dragged him into the server room, and shut him in. Mike then ran and made his escape to the stairs.

Once he got to the lobby, a firefighter spotted him. “Hey, you. What are you doing here? Didn’t you hear the alarm?” The fireman said. Mike shook his head. “No, I was in the can.” Mike said. He was still hurting from the other man’s kicks. The fireman grabbed him by the arm and escorted him out.

Mike looked around for his car. He knew it was being watched but he hoped he could get away. He spotted it where it was parked and saw the leader and a few more of his men sitting on the hood. The leader had not noticed Mike yet. Mike needed a further distraction when a hand grabbed his shoulder. It was the front desk lady.

“Those men have are not feds.” She said. Mike figured they weren’t when nobody showed him a badge. She handed him her car keys. “My car is on the other side. Get out of here.” She said. Mike gave her a grateful smile and snuck away, discarding the bellhop jacket.

He found the car, a station wagon, in the rear of the hotel where the employees parked. Looking around, he sees that he is alone. Mike gets in the car and drives off. He needs to find sanctuary.

### *Will Byers*

A sharp knock on his door has Will looking out the window of his apartment. He sees a man in a suit at his door. Will grimaces and hopes its not another damn Jehovah’s Witness. Will opens the door and the man in the suit looks up. He is a short man with cropped hair and glasses. He gives Will a small smile. “Hello, are you by chance Will Byers?” He asked. Will nodded. “Great. I need to ask some questions about Mike Wheeler.” He said. Will was confused. “Is Mike in trouble?” Will asked.

“He might be. Can I come in.” He asked. Will shook his head. “Sorry, don’t know you or who your with.” Will said. The man smiled and pulled a badge from his pocket. “Adam Smiley, FBI.” He said. Will looked at the badge. Having lived with his step dad for a while, he could spot a fake badge a mile away. Will decided not to play his

hand just yet. He might learn more from him.

Will gestured him inside. He led the man into the kitchen. The living room was visible from the kitchen and had articles of clothes strewn about.

“Sorry for the mess. My boyfriend becomes a drama queen when he is running late for work.” Will said. Adam merely nodded. Will was surprised, most guys would be uncomfortable with the idea of being alone with a gay man. Some old bigotry about them trying to turn them gay. Will made a second cup and offered him coffee. Adam shook his head.

“So, what kind of trouble is Mike in?” Will asked. Adam began. “He may have stolen military secrets. Has he been acting erratic to you?” Adam asked. Will shook his head. “No, Mike would never do something that dumb.” Will said. Not adding that he wouldn’t do anything that dumb without involving the rest of the group. Despite everyone nearing their thirties, Party rules still applied.

“So Mike tends to do dumb things?” Adam asked. Will smirked. “Yea, but its more like over exerting himself. Guy likes to work out. He was really bad about it in high school.” Will said.

### *High School*

Yea, Mike was really bad about working out. So much so, Will often had to get him from the gym. It had been a year since El was taken. They all felt the after effects of missing her. Will felt just as empty as the rest. Will felt he lost family that day, which was mostly true even though Hopper and his mom hadn’t gotten married yet, Will still saw El as his sister.

He found Mike doing his reps. Shaking his head, Will walked over with a water bottle. “You know I’s unhealthy to work out this much without hydrating right?” Will asked. Mike fixed him a glare. “I just started. Had a run in with that new girl, Suzie.” Mike said. “Define run in.” Will said.

“Some assholes were playing keep away with her bible and I got mad.” Mike said as he put the bar bell back. “Well that was nice of

you. Don't tell Max you were nice to a new girl or she might get pissy" Will said. Mike gave a small laugh. "Max was there. She might give me an earful later." Mike said.

Suzie Pizzolo was a recent transfer from Utah. She was a Mormon and was frequently picked on because of it. Will found the good Christians slightly hypocritical for judging someone for not following their brand of faith. What surprised everyone was she knew Dustin from summer camp and the two were always off building some form of gadget.

The Party was hesitant to accept her, mostly because of Mike's cold treatment of Max, but were surprised when Mike warmed up to the girl. Probably because it was hard to hate such a bubbly person. Max made sure to give Mike shit over that a lot.

"Well, Nancy sent me to find you. She thinks you spend too much time in here." Will said. Mike groaned. "A couple of hours a day and you guys think I am obsessed with working out." He said.

"No, your obsessed with finding El. This is just a means to help her when you find her." Will said. He hated that. In all honesty, Will gave up the idea of finding El six months after she was taken. The US government took her, and the mere idea of looking for her was laughable. But they kept the dream alive for Mike, a constant argument between Max and the rest of the Party.

"Yea. I do hope to find her. But Nancy's right, I might be pushing you guys away." Mike said. Will smiled and helped Mike off the bench.

"I think we should let Suzie play D&D with us this weekend. Dustin helped her roll her character. Halfling fighter." Will said. Mike laughed, that was going to be fun. "Yea, I'll get Dustin to invite her later." Mike said and the pair left the weight room.

### *The Present*

Adam cleared his throat and Will snapped out of his flashback. "I'm sorry. I don't really know what to tell you, other than take your fake badge out of my home." Will said, dropping the pretense. Adam began reaching for his service weapon when Will had a sawn off

shotgun already in his face, he kept one hidden in the kitchen, much to the chagrin of his boyfriend Chad.

“What, you thought I didn’t recognize a fake badge?” Will said. Adam put his hands up. “Now, get out of my home and don’t ever come back.” Will said. Adam walked out and ran for his car.

### *Jericho*

“The bastard out ran us.” Jericho said. His men looked at him confused. “He should be out here. We should have spotted him by now.” Jericho said, frustration building up. What tipped him over the edge was when he saw Lopez and Nicolai walked out of the hotel, looking worse for wear.

“What the shit just happened?” Jericho growled. Nicolai shook his head in embarrassment. “Guy had some moves. He took us out.” Lopez said. “I sent two of my best after some geek and he kicked your asses?” Jericho was not happy. “Boss, it’s Smiley.” One of his men, Sanders, handed him a radio.

“Please tell me you have good news.” Jericho said. “No sir, I got made and he pulled a shotgun on me. I dunno what the hell is going on anymore.” Smiley said. Jericho agreed. “We need to catch his trail before Brenner finds out we shat the bed.” Jericho said.

“I can look into a few more leads.” Smiley said as he killed the radio line. Jericho rounded up his men and headed for the RV and vans.

### *Indianapolis suburbs*

Dustin Henderson was getting ready for work when the phone rang. “Fortress Henderson, how may I direct your call.” Dustin said. He recognized Will on the other end laughing. “Hey man, how’s your morning going?” Will asked.

“It’s going ok, getting ready for work, what’s up?” He asked. “I had a weird visitor by a guy claiming to be FBI. He wasn’t, but he was looking for Mike.” Will said. Dustin’s face got serious.

“What’s going on with Mike?” Dustin asked. He could hear Will shrug. “I dunno, but assume anyone asking for Mike is not a friendly.

I'm going to call Max and warn her and Lucas." Will said. Dustin agreed.

After hanging up with Will, Dustin's wife walked out of the bathroom, she was just getting done with an overnight shift at the hospital where she was a nurse. "Dusty Bum, who was that?" The perky, yet tired voice of Suzie asked from the bedroom.

"That was Will. Mike is in trouble. Some guys claiming to be feds are looking for him." Dustin said. Suzie rushed out, just changed into her pajamas. "Mike? He wouldn't do anything without telling us would he?" She asked. Dustin shook his head. "He wouldn't do anything to jeopardize Harrison. He loves that boy to much." Dustin said.

### *Three years ago*

Dustin and Suze walked into the maternity ward of the hospital. Both had exhausting days but made a trip out to see their newest party member. Dustin had a stuffed bear and Suzie hand made a blanket for the occasion.

They found the room quickly and walked in seeing Lucas and Mike hugging. Dustin breathed a sigh of relief, despite the happy day Lucas and Mike were still testy with each other. "He's a beautiful boy. You should be a proud dad." Lucas said, his own tears falling from his face. Mike had a wide grin on his face. He looked over and saw Dustin and Suzie enter the room.

"Oh good, you two didn't kill each other." Suzie said. Both Lucas and Mike laughed.

"Yea, I think Max will kill us if we fought today." Lucas said. Mike nodded. They turned around to find a sleeping Max, exhausted from childbirth. In a small crib next to Max was a bundle of blue blanket.

"Come here and meet Harrison James Wheeler." Mike said. The names came from Max's dad and Mike's respect for Jim Hopper, who sadly couldn't come due to having the flu. Suzie and Dustin walked over and saw him. Suzie let out a slight squeal and Dustin had a large grin looking at the newborn.

A pang of regret came over Dustin, the past year had been a rollercoaster with the Party fighting over Mike and Max's brief relationship. Honestly Dustin would have preferred it be Max and Lucas having a kid, or even Mike and El, but in Dustin's heart El was dead. He looked at Mike, who was beaming at his small son. Okay, sure it didn't work out the way anyone planned, but that was life.

"Well, he has lots of uncles and aunts who love him already." Dustin said. Mike offered to let his friend hold his son and Dustin gladly took him. The baby cooed in his sleep and Dustin knew he was going to be the uncle who let him get away with everything.

### *The Present*

Dustin grabbed his car keys and kissed Suzie goodbye. "Get some rest, and call me if Mike shows up." He said. "Will do Dusty bum." She said as Dustin left the house.

Suzie was worried about Mike, he usually was a bit more level headed than the rest of the Party. But she couldn't do anything now and headed off to get some sleep.

A few hours later, Suzie woke up to pounding at the back door. She got up quickly, put a robe on and made her way to the door. She looked through the peephole and saw Mike outside. She opened the door and let him in.

"Mike, holy shit are you okay?" She asked. Mike shook his head. "I've had a hell of a morning. I'll tell you about it if you can get me some food." Mike said. Suzie nodded and walked him to the kitchen. Suzie fixed him up some French toast and noticed him favoring one side of himself.

"Take your shirt off." Suzie said. Mike gave her a look. "I can tell your hurt, now take your shirt off so I can see." She said. Mike was still hesitant. He hated having anyone worry about him. Suzie knew this, and had a way to get him to comply.

"If you don't take your damn shirt off I'm going to smack you one." Suzie said threatening him with a spatula. Mike's eyes went wide. All feared Suzie's spatula, even Max.

Mike slowly unbuttoned his shirt and carefully pulled it off. He had Suzie help him with his undershirt. He looked down and saw a massive bruise on his ribcage. “Owchies.” Mike said with a grimace. Suzie quickly put the French Toast on a plate and looked at Mike’s ribs.

“Well, they aren’t broken as far as I can tell, but you need to take it easy.” She said.

“Sure, I’ll tell the heavily armed men and their robot to take it easy on hunting me.” Mike said. Suzie raised an eyebrow. “Robot?” She questioned. Mike took in a deep breath and began explaining.

Mike finished his toast while he told the tale of his morning. Once he finished, Suzie had a few questions. “How did you guess it was a robot?” She asked. He shrugged his shoulders. “The way it talked, the way it hit. It was small but it packed a punch. Plus hitting it hurt my hand. Not just its head, but also its body.” Mike said.

“Also, why did it suddenly malfunction?” Suzie asked. Again Mike merely speculated, “Must have been overloaded, I dunno, I was trying to get out of there.” He said. Mike pulled out the CD case from his back pocket and handed it to her.

“This is some screenshots I took of the men who were chasing me. I wanna know if you can hack the military database and find out about them?” Mike asked. Suzie smiled. Her other hobby was some light hacking. She grabbed the case and saw how tired Mike was.

“Couch, Now!” She ordered. Mike smiled and nodded. He grabbed a blanket from a closet and crashed on the couch. Suzie smiled as Mike fell asleep. She liked Mike, she thought he was a great story teller. She said as much their first D&D session. Suzie went to the phone and called Dustin and told him Mike was on the couch. Dustin breathed a sigh of relief.

“I’ll be home in a few hours. Love you Suzie Poo.” Dustin said. Suzie laughed. “Love you to Dusty Bum.” She said as she hung up.

She pulled out the CD and began working while Mike slept. They were a party, and when a party member required assistance, they

were bound to help.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Tell me what you think. I do like getting feedback.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the slight delay, I was sick most of the weekend. Also the chapter might be shorter than normal because the next one will be longer.

Suzie worked hard through the afternoon. She took care to keep her tracks covered as she went through military databases. She looked over and saw Mike still asleep on the couch. She worried about him, in the same way she worried about all of her friends and family. Granted, being Mike's friend was never easy, but the man always had the Party's back. She remembered when he really became her friend.

#### *High School*

Suzie was walking past the gym when they jumped her. A group of boys led by Troy Walsh came out of a stair well and pushed her down. One grabbed her backpack off of her while the rest held her down. Suzie tried to fight their grip but they were too strong. One of the assholes pulled out her bible.

"Oh yea, this retard doesn't worship Jesus like the rest of us." Troy snarled. Suzie rolled her eyes, how little this wastoid knew, but she didn't think now was the time to argue faith while being pinned down.

Troy then pulled out pages from her bible, tossing the pages around. "Stop it, that's my parents!" She cried. James laughed as Suzie began crying.

"Get off of her NOW!" A voice came from behind them. Troy looked over and laughed. "Oh look, it's Frogface!" Troy said. Suzie looked over and saw Mike Wheeler walking out of the locker room. She was slightly relieved to see him.

Mike was angry, seeing four boys /attacking a girl over something dumb but once he realized it was Suzie, Mike was going to hurt someone. "Why don't you make us, Frogface." Troy said. Mike

needed no other invitation.

He went for the first boy, Hank, and punched him across the face. Mike grabbed him by the back of his shirt, and slammed his head into another boys' face. Mike dropped Hank and grabbed the stunned boy, a skittish boy named Grey, and kneed him in the stomach. That was enough to drop Grey as he fell down gasping for air.

James got up, allowing Suzie to get away, and walked towards Mike. He had gotten bigger as they entered High School, and Mike wasn't sure he could fight him. Mike though had not made sound and rational decisions lately.

James sent a punch towards Mike's head, who ducked down and rushed past him and delivered an elbow blow to his back. Pressing his advantage, Mike kicked the back of James knee and brought him down. Mike then delivered a powerful kick to the back of his head and knocked him down.

Mike looked over and saw Troy struggling to pull his knife out of his pocket. Mike rushed him and tackled him to the ground. He began punching Troy in the face, hoping to end this soon. Mike didn't notice till he heard Suzie yell "Look out!" as he felt himself pulled off Troy by James. James threw him into a wall with Mike hitting the ground hard. As Mike tried to get up, James kicked him hard in the side, knocking Mike back down. James then grabbed him by the back of his shirt and held him against the wall.

He felt every blow James launched at his face and body. From a corner, Mike saw Troy get up and finally pull his knife out. "Hold him still, I need to carve him up good." He said. James pulled him into a hold and Mike could see the giddy excitement on Troy's face. "I think I'll carve my name on your forehead." Troy said. James grabbed his head and put it in a chokehold. As Troy was about to put the blade to Mike's head, Suzie surprised him and sprayed a can of her hairspray in his face. Mike closed his eyes as she sprayed into James' face as well. He let Mike go as the spray started irritating his face. Troy was swinging his knife wildly, trying to cut at something. Suzie kicked Troy in his knees and knocked him down, while Mike grabbed James arm and tossed him over his shoulder and landed him on top of Troy. Both boys fell unconscious.

Suzie moved to Mike who was resting against a wall. "You stupid boy, why didn't you go for help?" She screeched. Mike gave her a wry smile. "No time and I didn't know what they were about to do to you. Plus I kinda needed the exercise." He said. Suzie lightly scowled at him. "Well let's get out of here before we get in trouble," Suzie said. Mike nodded and helped pick up the pages that were ripped out of her bible.

"Thank you." She said as she grabbed the pages. Hopefully she could fix it. "No need to thank me, I know I can be a bit standoffish but you are one of us." Mike said. Suzie smiled slightly.

She knew Mike from Dustin and she moved to town a couple of months ago when her dad's job relocated him. Suzie met Dustin in 85' at science camp and the two were somewhat romantic partners. When she moved to Hawkins, Dustin had been excited, probably more than she was to see him. When she arrived, Dustin had introduced his friends. They had seemed nice enough, except for Mike who was very standoffish. But Suzie saw it in the entire group. They were broken.

She had been taking it slow with them but to hear Mike thought of her as one of them, it lifted her spirits. She noticed Mike was limping slightly. "Cmon, let's get you patched up," She said as she helped Mike.

### *Present day*

Suzie was brought out of her musings by a page coming up, telling her she got in. She looked at the page and saw a lack of information about the men hunting her friend. Lot's of references to men being recruited from all over the world. The leader, the one Mike described, had his name redacted in several pages. All she found was a name, Bravo Company.

### *Bravo Company- Alexander Hotel*

Jericho sat by one of the trucks he used when one of his men informed him of a new arrival. He looked over and groaned. He was 5'7", bald, wore blue shirts and had Italian ancestry. Saverio Alacqua had arrived. He was the chief of staff for Dr. Brenner and he had a

smile on his face.

"So, I hire the best trackers in the world to get a damn nerd and somehow you messed that up." He said. Jericho grumbled at the insult.

"Yes, one nerd who also happens to be CIA trained." Jericho said. Saverio looked at him confused. "Our intelligence didn't say anything about CIA training. I can get you the file." He said.

"Oh yea, he has some kind of government training, he took out two of my men and used a fire alarm as an escape plan. Mind telling me why the Secretary of Energy wants him dead?" Jericho asked.

"Top secret about that, hell I don't know why." Saverio said. Jericho didn't believe him. The entire operation from the start had been half truth's and lies, typically from Saverio. Hell, Jericho didn't know for weeks he was working for the Energy Department, much less the Secretary himself.

"So, what do you plan to do?" Saverio asked. Jericho gave him a glare. He hated being questioned. "I need to run him to ground. I need access to your media contacts" Jericho said.

### *Sinclair Apartment*

Lucas checked the bag that had Harrison's clothes and a few toys. He looked over at the play pen and saw the boy making faces at him, ones that Lucas returned. He loved the little guy, mostly because he was part of Max. Lucas looked to the boy and began again pondering what he would be to the boy. He wasn't his father, a fact he was reminded of when he saw that the boy's copper hair looked like Mike's. He didn't like the idea of being Uncle Lucas, since to Lucas he was partially raising him.

It was a rough time the Party had when Max told them she was pregnant with Mike's baby. He still felt reminded of that fateful day.

### *Four Years Ago- Wheeler apartment*

Lucas walked to the door of his 'friends' apartment. Things had been icy with him and Mike since he started dating Max. Granted they

were broken up at the time, but even Mike should have understood the bro code.

Max had called him over. She was still living with Mike despite their relationship being over for a month. Things were improving with her and Lucas, right down to having civil conversations. Lucas gave a sharp knock on the door.

Mike answered, and he looked slightly annoyed at seeing Lucas. Mike was still not on good terms with him. Later, Lucas would be told that his treatment of Max was the reason for their disagreements, not the things Lucas had said about Mike.

Mike opened the door more and motioned Lucas to enter. He led him to the living room where Dustin and Will were talking with Max. Lucas noted the air was thick with tension. The relationship Mike and Max had didn't go over well with the Party. Suzie was the peacemaker on this and she seemed to be absent

"Suzie had to cover a shift." Mike said, as if reading his mind. Lucas curtly nodded. He looked to Max and smiled inside. She looked at him and smiled back at him. She then gestured for everyone to sit down.

"Ok, I guess you want to know why I called you guys here." She said. She was nervous, that much was clear. The guys gave her reassuring smiles.

"So, I might as well get it out of the way. I'm pregnant." She said. Dustin and Will whooped, Will went to hug Max while Dustin went to Lucas. "Congrats Man." He said. Lucas glared at how dumb his friend was.

"It's not mine." He said. Dustin's smile faltered. "What do you mean? I thought you two got back together." He asked.

"No, we only just now started having civil conversations again." Lucas looked over and saw Mike was shocked. Despite living with her, she kept the news till she told the party. Lucas was not happy. He walked up to Mike and despite him being shocked by the news, Lucas striking him in the face shocked him, and the Party, more.

Lucas stormed out, with Max following him out. “What the fuck was that asshole?!” She yelled. Lucas turned on her.

“You leave me, shack up with him and now your having his kid?” Lucas was furious. Max was taken aback by the anger in his voice. “What, you dump me and then get mad I am with Mike? You think I am your damn property?” Max says, her voice raising.

“I just thought.... I would be....” Lucas can barely keep his thought strait. Max just glared at him.

“I thought you would be mature enough to handle this. Clearly you aren’t.” She said. She stormed back inside, leaving Lucas out in the hallway.

Lucas was alone in the hallway, he could hear muffled talking coming from the apartment, some slight crying and a few cheers. It was to much for Lucas and he walked away. He had a lot of thinking to do.

### *Present Day*

It had taken Lucas six months to apologize. He honestly didn’t mean for it to be that long but his job was hectic and he honestly thought the two were mad at him. It was when Dustin tricked him into coming to his house for a celebration that he found Mike and Max there. He walked up to them and told them he wished he could undo the past year and found himself being hugged by both of them.

Three months after Harrison was born, Max moved back in. It was an adjustment, but he felt things were on track with both of them. So much so that he had a little box hidden away in his sock drawer.

Max walked into the bedroom, giving Lucas a quick kiss before heading to Harrison. “How is mommy’s little man? Ready to go see grandma?” She asked as she picked up the toddler. Lucas smiled, motherhood was a weird reaction to the normally stoic Max. Harrison made squeeing noises in approval.

“I got his bag packed, you staying the night in Hawkins?” Lucas asked. Max nodded. “It’s a long damn drive down there. But mom is taking Harrison to Mike’s on Monday. Then he has him for two

weeks.” She said. He nodded in approval.

“Well, best get going before traffic gets bad. See you later babe.” She said, and kissed him. Lucas hugged the two and smiled as Harrison reached for him. Lucas picked him out of Max’s arms, gave him a hug as well and returned him to his mother. “You be good for Grandma Susan, ya hear.” Lucas said. The child made a noise that sounded like agreement.

After the pair left, Lucas went to the kitchen and began making lunch. He turned on the TV for background noise. He starts on his sandwich and he looks at the TV and does a double take.

On the screen is Mike, and the news report is talking like he is a criminal.

“Once again, the FBI is looking at the whereabouts of Michael Wheeler in suspicion of collaborating with a known terror group. Anyone with knowledge of his whereabouts are encouraged to contact local police or the FBI hotline.

His phone rang and Lucas quickly picked it up. “What the fuck!” Lucas said. “Yea, I think I need to catch you up. Is Max there?” Will asked,

“No, she is taking Harrison to Hawkins. Spending the weekend with Susan.” He said. Will sounded slightly relieved. “Okay, well some weird stuff just happened and Suzie just caught me up.” Will says and then begins explaining the past few hours to him.

### *Henderson house*

Mike wakes up to see Suzie looking at him gravely. “Find anything?” He asks as he pulls the blanket off of him. Suzie shakes her head. “No, somehow a mercenary unit is more classified than Area 51.” She says and shows him the screen.

Almost every name for the group that he got pictures of was heavily classified, even most of the men’s home countries.

Their musings are cut short when Dustin loudly enters the house. “OHMYGODOHMYGODOHMYGOD!” He shouts as he runs inside.

“Dustin, what the fuck?” Mike asks. Instead of answering, Dustin turns the TV on to the local news. On screen is Mike’s picture and he was wanted for terrorism. “Shit.” Mike says, summing up his feelings.

He made his way towards the door but Suzie grabs his arm. “Where the hell do you think you’re going?” She asks. Mike points to the door. “I am not letting you get in danger because of me.” Mike says.

“Well, kinda too bad about that Mikey boy, party rules and all that.” Dustin says. Mike rolls his eyes, he hated when Dustin invoked that. “Well, we can’t stay here. We need to get as far from here as possible.” Mike says. Suzie and Dustin nod in agreement.

Their musings are cut short as the power is cut inside the house. Before they can react, the back door and front door are broken open and a SWAT team moves in. They aim their guns at the group as they lift their hands in the air. Behind them, a man in a blue dress shirt walks in and gives them a smile.

“Mr. Wheeler, So good to make your acquaintance.” He said.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

As always, reviews and kudos are welcome.

## **4. Chapter 4**

### **Summary for the Chapter:**

Mike has been captured by the Department of Energy. Can he save his friends and escape. And will he survive his face to face encounter with the fiendish Jericho?

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

My hands hurt. Sorry this took so long, motivation was limited and I was playing Batman Arkham City. At the end of the chapter i have an important announcement.

Jericho watched as the prisoners were brought in, black bags over their heads. He looked at the smug look that Saverio had. Jericho rolled his eyes. The media smear was a means to run Wheeler to ground. The next phase was to arrest his allies to force him out. It was a happy coincidence that Wheeler was at one of the homes. Jericho didn't care if Saverio took the credit for the capture, all that mattered was the job got done.

He sent a few of his men with the team that went to the Henderson's house. They looked a little scrawny to be soldiers. Jericho noticed one of the men had difficulty carrying his rifle. He walked up to the soldier, named Taylor, and helped him with his rifle.

"You really shouldn't carry weapons you are incapable of using." Jericho said, the kid was small and scrawny, not a soldier at all. Taylor shrugged. "Mr. Alacqua said soldiers use those. I'm just not used to the weight." He said. Jericho fixed him with a stare. "How many times have you been out in the field?" He asked. Taylor thought about it. "This is our first time actually out in the field, but we trained for months." He said. Jericho rolled his eyes.

"Where do you do your training?" Jericho asked. Taylor guided him to another room. Inside was several computers with doctors monitoring health signs as several people were hooked up to

machines. Jericho looked dumbfounded.

“We get our training through VR. We learn a lot without actually being put in harms way.” Taylor said. Jericho pinched the bridge of his nose. He had heard of this program, he also thought it was stupid. “Kid, VR training is fine and all, but if you never put it into practice, you will fail every time against a seasoned and well trained force.” Jericho explained. Taylor didn’t look convinced.

“We were able to capture Wheeler and his friends.” He said. The doors opened and four men came in, they looked worse for wear and had quite a few injuries. “The hell happened to you?” Jericho asked. One of the men looked up, his face bloody from a beating and took the lead. “We did as you asked and raided Will Byers apartment, he was ready for us and well, look at what he did.” He explained.

Jericho wasn’t angry, far from it, he was amused as these men were escorted to the medical facility. Saverio walked in, his face contorted with rage. “The men I sent to retrieve Lucas Sinclair and Max Mayfield came back empty handed. They look like they got their asses kicked.” He said. He was trying to make this Jericho’s fault. Jericho shrugged his shoulders.

“We have what we came for. Once we get this business over with we let the Henderson’s go and let it blow over.” Jericho said. Saverio was not having that. “They just humiliated my men. I need to teach them a lesson.” Saverio said.

“We have our target. We already made a lot of noise with my plan but we got an unexpected result. Now, we let them go and let this blow over.” Jericho said. Saverio huffed. “Plus. Your men aren’t as well trained as you led me to believe.” He said pointing at the VR machines. Saverio looked at him confused.

“This is state of the art training.” He said. Jericho scoffed. “Your men can barely hold their weapons, much less fight as a unit. I am willing to bet if I didn’t send a couple of my guys with the Henderson raid, we would be struggling to find them still.” Jericho said. Saverio was still angry. “Well, once I am done with Wheeler, I will take my men’s pain out on the Henderson’s.” He said. Jericho made a note to have one of his men to watch the Henderson’s.

"You wanna watch me interrogate Mr. Wheeler Jerry?" Saverio asked. As he laughed, Jericho slammed him against a wall. "My name is Jericho, you will do well to remember that punk." He said and let him go. Saverio nodded and led him to the interrogation room's observation room.

### *Road to Hawkins*

Max was wore out from the drive to her mother's house. Sometimes she wished she lived closer. She also wished Billy and Heather didn't move to San Diego. The thought of her terror of a brother being domesticated still made her laugh. He had me her when he was a lifeguard in 1985. It was a strange relationship. Speaking of strange, Max looked at the backseat and saw Harrison sound asleep. Car rides usually knocked him out.

She thought about Mike, the unusual father of her boy. The pair didn't have the best start to their friendship. First he was moody as hell over El being missing for a year, then the fact in July of 1985 El dumped Mike for a week and Mike kind of blamed Max. It wasn't her fault Mike lied to El because Hopper was tired of Mike being over all the damn time. Things had worked out and the two were inseparable love birds. Till 1986, when that bastard took El away.

Things were difficult. Max didn't have a happy home life and spent a ton of time with her friends. Except for Mike. The fact they weren't close friends and El's abduction made Max keep her distance. That was until that December.

### *December 1986*

Max was sitting in her room reading, trying to ignore the fight Billy and Neil were having. Neil hated Billy's girlfriend and made it known his displeasure. Max didn't know what the problem was, Heather was nice, but she also didn't take bullshit and has called Neil out a few times. Her dad was the owner of the Hawkins Post so Neil could never do anything to her. Billy on the other hand, Neil made his life hell. Max wished she could talk to El about all of this.

The thought of her lost friend hurt Max's heart. It was a few months since armed thugs put guns to them and forced El to surrender to that

white haired asshole. She hadn't taken the experience well. Not as bad as Mike had. He still walked around like he lost a piece of himself. She wished she could do something for him, but it was awkward between the pair.

Her supercomm went off and Mike's voice came through. "Max, do you copy?" His voice came through frantic. Max grabbed the walkie and answered. "Yea, I copy Mike, whats going on, over?" She asked. She was pretty good with radio etiquette. "I need your help and nobody is around. Can you come to my house?" He asked. Max was silent for a moment, he seemed freaked out by something. "I am on my way." Max said.

She grabbed her backpack, she hated carrying a purse so this will do and grabbed her skateboard. The snow would make it difficult but she did join a group of dweebs with an ethos she could get behind. A party member required assistance.

She was out the front door when a voice stopped her. "Where are you going?" Billy asked. He wasn't snarling like he usually did. But he was irritated from his argument with Neil. "I'm going over to Mike's. Something was wrong when he called." She said. Billy nodded and pulled his keys out. "Let's go, It's to damn cold for you to skate." He said. Max nodded and got in the Camero.

The ride was short but silent. Billy was still fuming about the fight that Max had tuned out. The pair also had a bit of a rocky relationship. It was improving over the years but it was still awkward.

"You ok Billy?" She asked. He nodded but his eyes betrayed his anger. "For what it's worth, Heather is really cool and she is good for you." She said. Billy nodded. "Well, I'm glad you and Susan think so. I am just so fucking tired of dad badmouthing her." He said. Max nodded and put a hand on his arm.

"Hey, it says a lot about you if you hate Neil saying shit about Heather." She said. Billy smiled a little. "Well, I may deck his ass if he talks about Mr. Sinclair again. Man got me a job and Neil sees fit to talk shit about him." Billy said. Max smiled at him. Billy helped Mr. Sinclair at his law office while Billy was in college. He was

studying Law and Mr. Sinclair said if he kept up the good work he would write a letter of recommendation to the University of Chicago Law School.

They arrived at Mike's house and found no cars in the drive way. Both Billy and Max got out. Once they reached the door, Max knocked and Mike answered, looking more haggard than usual. He wasn't surprised to see Billy, or at least didn't care he was there.

"It's Holly, she's sick and I don't know what to do." Mike said. He also sounded sick. "Well, let's check on her." Max said and Mike led them both upstairs. He led them past his room, which Max noticed was a little worse for wear. Once they reached the room, Max walked inside with Billy looking after Mike.

She walked in and saw the little blonde look up, she gave her a weak smile. "Hey there Ladybug." Max said, a nickname she gave Holly because of a Halloween costume she was wearing when Max first formally met her. Holly gave her a weak hello. Max knelt down next to her and felt her forehead. She was burning up.

"Is Mikey okay? He was checking on me but he kept falling over." Holly asked. Max grimaced. "Yea, Mikey is fine. Why isn't your mommy taking care of you?" Max asked. Holly shrugged her shoulders. "Mommy left with Daddy, they have been gone for a while." She said. Max looked to the door and wondered how long Mike had been watching Holly.

"Well, me and Billy are here and we will help out." She said smiling at Holly. The small girl smiled at the redhead. Max got up and left the room to find Billy holding Mike up. He really looked like shit.

"How long have you been watching her like this?" Max demanded quietly. Mike looked up, he could barely stand. "They left a week ago to visit one of Dad's college friends. Mom didn't want to leave Holly like this but Dad said I needed to man up about this." He explained. Max's eyes narrowed. "How long have you been sick?" She asked. "A few days. It didn't get bad till yesterday." He said. The translation was he was just as bad when they left but put on a brave face so his dad could go out of town.

“Okay, let’s get you in bed.” Billy said moving him. Mike tried to fight him off. “No, I need to be near Holly. I have to take care of her.” He said. “Yea, and who is taking care of you?” Billy asked. Mike shrugged. “I’ll be fine.” He said. “Okay, how about we take you both downstairs?” Max asked. Mike seemed to like that and nodded.

Billy helped Mike to Ted’s La-z-boy and Max carried Holly in a blanket and set her on the couch. The pair went to the kitchen with Max fuming at the situation. “God damn paladin trying to kill himself. Fucking Karen not having a goddamn spine. Asshole Ted not seeing his damn kids are sick.” She grumbled as she looked in the pantry for some soup. Billy was grabbing a pot. “You think he should have called sooner?” Billy asked. Max turned around carrying two cans of tomato soup. “I think his parents should have stayed. He is in no condition to take care of Holly. He barely takes care of himself.” She said. “Is it because of ya know....El?” Billy asked.

Billy learned about El through an incident last July when Starcourt Mall caught fire. She saved many of them with her powers, and Billy saw it. He agreed to keep quiet about it and was lukewarm welcomed to the group along with Steve’s coworker Robin. They knew about the government taking her in September. Max considered this. Mike was a depressed mess but she didn’t think he was self destructive. The pair began making the soup, both taking turns checking on Mike and Holly.

“Where is Nancy in all of this?” Billy asked Mike. Mike looked up and shook his head. “I think she is staying with Jonathan. Her and dad have been fighting.” Mike said weakly. Billy nodded and headed back to the kitchen.

“Hey, what’s the number for Byers?” Billy asked. Max told him and saw him call. “Hey Mrs. Byers, can I speak with Nancy?” Billy asked. He waited a few moments before speaking again. “Your brother and sister are sick and your parents left them here.” Billy said. He wasn’t trying to be accusing. “Me and Max are taking care of them but I dunno how your mom expects a sick person to care for a sick person.” He said. After a moment he hung up the phone. “Nancy is coming over to help out. She is properly pissed off.” Billy said. Max laughed a little.

Once the soup was done, and a couple of glasses of orange juice were filled, Nancy came in through the front door, followed by Mrs. Byers. Well, Mrs. Hopper now, but old habits and such. They both entered the living room to see Billy helping Mike eat his soup while Max was feeding Holly. Nancy was slightly frantic till she saw Max and Billy were taking care of them.

“Sorry, I didn’t know.” She said apologetically. It wasn’t a problem and soon Joyce was taking charge. She had Nancy and Max give Holly a hot bath, and Billy helped Mike into some warm clothes to help break his fever. “I am going to kill Karen for not calling me.” Joyce muttered as she checked Mike’s temperature.

Joyce returned home that evening, satisfied Nancy had things in hand with Billy and Max. The group went down to the basement to sleep. Max looked over at Mike, he was still awake.

“Mike, what the hell is wrong with you?” She whispered at him. He looked at her, he was ashamed of himself. “Sorry, I just have been struggling.” Mike said. She placed her hand on his.

“We all are Mike. You’re not alone in this.” She said. Mike looked down and felt ashamed in himself. He began nodding in agreement. “I’m sorry. Your right. I will do better.” Mike said. Max smiled. “Good, because if you don’t, I’ll kick your ass.” She said. Mike smiled with her. He went to sleep and hoped things would improve.

### *Present day*

Max passed into Hawkins, letting the memory fade. Ted and Karen came back a few days later and Billy gave them both a piece of his mind. The message was delivered. Nancy moved back in and Mike started asking for help more. It was a good change.

She made it to her mother’s house and parked in the driveway. “Ready for a fun weekend baby?” Max asked the sleeping child.

### *Department of Energy holding facility*

Mike sat in the chair of the interrogation room. They removed the bag from his head and kept his hands cuffed behind his back. He

looked around the room and saw a single camera the top corner of the room.

He looked at the mirror, knowing he was being watched. Well, he hoped they record the show he is about to give them

### *Observation*

“Your sure you can handle this on your own?” Jericho asked. Saverio rolled his eyes. “I think I can handle one dumbass nerd.” He said as he left the room. Jericho wanted to point out nerds were smart, probably smarter than he was, but he just rolled his eyes. He was joined by two guards, both watching with him as Saverio entered the Interrogation room.

“Mr. Wheeler, hows it going? Has your stay been to your liking?” He asked. Wheeler did not miss a beat.

“Oh my stay has been fine, Although I asked for the dominatrix package, not the boring interrogation. I might wanna talk to management.” Wheeler said. Saverio began laughing slightly, then punched Wheeler in the head.

“You’re a stupid punk. You and your dumbass friends caused us a lot of trouble.” He said sitting across from him. “My name is Saverio Alacqua, I am chief of staff to Secretary Brenner.” He said. Wheeler scoffed, clearly not impressed.

Jericho was impressed by how Saverio wasn’t really intimidating Wheeler. Or at least he wasn’t showing it. The rumors he heard about Saverio were mostly about how he had a cruel streak a mile wide. Wheeler must not know or care.

“So, you know once your gone, everyone you ever associated with you will be punished. Suzie Henderson? Her medical license is about to be revoked. And her marriage to her husband? Its about to be annulled. And as for your son? I know some really bad foster parents.” Saverio said. Wheeler just kind of nodded at him.

Then Wheeler put his hands on the table, having picked his cuffs off. “Do you have to sound like a cartoon bad guy?” Wheeler asked.

Saverio looked embarrassed. Jericho imagined he sounded intimidating in his head. Saverio got up and rolled up his sleeves. Wheeler flashed a smile before kicking the table and shoved Saverio against the wall.

Wheeler punched Saverio with the handcuffs, delivering a cut across his face. He grabbed his head and slammed it against the mirror. The slam surprised Jericho. He looked at the two guards. “Go help him out.” He said. The pair nodded and headed to out.

They quickly entered the room and Wheeler turned to face them. He gave the table one more kick to knock the wind out of Saverio then rushed the guards. The one on the left tried to kick him, but Wheeler grabbed his leg and swung him to the right, knocking the other guard down. Jericho looked on, studying him.

Wheeler quickly used the handcuffs on them, then made for the door. Jericho also made for his door to give this boy a piece of his mind.

### *Holding Cell*

Suzie was separated from Dustin when they were brought in. She could tell he was next to her cell but the guard they had was under orders to keep them quiet. That gave her an idea.

“Mr. Guard man, I’m bored.” She whined. The guard showed up in front of her cell. “This isn’t a hotel, shut the fuck up.” He said. “But its boring.” She kept whining. She knew this was irritating. The guard grabbed his keys and unlocked the cell while muttering about shutting her up.

Once the cell door was open, Suzie was ready and before he knew it, he was tossed on the ground inside the cell and kicked in the face hard. He was out before he knew it. “God what a moron.” She said as she grabbed his keys.

She went to the next cell where her Dusty-Bum was standing by the cell with a wide grin. “That’s my Suzie-Poo.” He said, kissing her as she opened the cell.

### *Interrogation*

As Mike exited the room and locked it behind him, he noticed another figure leave the observation room. He was an inch taller than him, wearing a suit. He was older than Mike, but looked no less dangerous with his large muscles. It was the Bravo Company Boss.

"I gotta say Wheeler, you gave me a laugh. Saverio needed to see what his schoolyard taunts would bring him. But I need to get paid. So if you surrender here and now, I will keep them from beating your ass." He said.

Mike did not surrender, instead he got into a fighting position. The Boss smiled and pulled off his blazer. "I was hoping you would do that." He said as he rolled up his sleeves. Mike noticed his forearms had tattoos, one was a clear d20. He hoped he could ask about that some time.

Mike was rushed by the Boss, a punch swung from his right slammed into his ribs. When Mike leaned down, his left elbow slammed into his back. "You beat two of my best men. I know you can do better than this." He said as he picked Mike up by the back of his shirt.

As he was being lifted up, Mike used his left foot to launch himself up and kick him under his chin with his right foot. The Boss stepped back a few feet, then he smiled at Mike. "Much better." He said and the two rushed each other.

The Boss sent a punch with his right, Mike ducked under him and punched him with his left, then pressed his advantage and punched his face with his right. He punched with his left, but the Boss blocked with his left and sent a punch into Mike's face with his right.

Mike staggered back and found himself being tackled. The Boss then jumped into the air and slammed him into the ground. Mike groaned as the Boss got off of him, and found himself getting kicked in his sides. Two powerful strikes hit him, but Mike grabbed his leg on the third and rolled away, putting him off balance. Mike got up and just as the Boss regained his footing, Mike shoulder tackled him. He

The Boss grabbed Mike by his collar, and Mike did the same to the Boss and the two started trading haymakers into each other. Mike felt blood coming out of his mouth and The Boss was developing bruising

to his face. Mike shoved the Boss back, letting go of his shirt collar, and then Mike kicked him hard in the face and knocked him on his back.

He didn't have time for more of this and rushed over him to another door. He closed it and took out the keys he took from Saverio. He was looking for the right key when a force slammed into the door. "Come on little boy. We are not done playing." The Boss said. Mike was done and found the right key and locked the door and ran off.

### *Jericho*

He slammed his fist into the metal door and let out a roar. "Yea, I am so not done with you." Jericho said as he headed to the interrogation room. He saw Saverio had a furious look on his face as he unlocked the door.

"HOW COULD YOU LET HIM GET AWAY!" He shouted. Jericho spit blood into his face. "How could you let him escape with your damn keys." Jericho said. Saverio looked shocked and saw his keys were removed.

"I admit, I also have been underestimating him. But playtime is now over." Jericho said as he took a radio from one of the handcuffed guards. "We have a prisoner escape. Lock down the facility. Find him." Jericho said into the receiver.

"Affirmative, we also have an escape from the holding cell's. The pair we brought in with Wheeler also escaped." The voice said. Jericho groaned, growing more irritated. "Get my men on this. Wheeler ran to the lab complex, send Martin and Ford there." He said. The voice rogered him and sent about his orders.

"Is there another way to the lab?" Jericho asked Saverio. He nodded and the two headed around.

### *Laboratory*

Mike ran through the lab area, taking care to avoid being seen. But he realized their was nobody there. It seemed odd there were no guards or scientists. He just spotted one lone scientist. He was an

older man with crazy hair. He didn't notice Mike so he headed for the door and found it locked.

"I was hoping to have a chat with you Mr. Wheeler." The scientist said in a thick German accent. Mike turned and saw he was still facing away from him. "Who are you?" Mike asked. The scientist turned around, cool blue eyes met Mike. "My name is Doctor Hans Strauss. And I am the creator of the machine that hunts you." He said. He did not sound proud, but sad.

"Why? Why are you after me?" Mike asked. Strauss grimaced. "It is not for me to tell you. Also it would take to long and you don't have the time. Bravo Company is after you. But maybe if you can escape, you may be able to stop this." He said handing Mike a disc. "What is this?" Mike asked. "A chance to end this." Strauss said and he pushed a button and opened the door. Coming through was Dustin and Suzie.

"Oh thank god, you got away." Dustin said as the three hugged each other. "You might want to leave." Strauss said as he pointed to the other end of the hall. Two men in BDU's arrived. One was a slimmer but muscular blonde man and the other was a large husky man with brown hair. "Shit." Dustin said. The pair walked towards them.

"You three need to surrender. No more need for violence today." The larger one said. Mike highly doubted his words. "You think I believe you?" Mike asked. "Doesn't matter, you stop now and we will bring you back peacefully" The large man said. Dustin got to Mike's left and Suzie to his right.

"No, I think we choose violence." Dustin said. The blonde nodded. "Well we tried to be nice." He said to the larger man. He nodded and ran at them. Mike and Suzie were tackled by the large man and both slammed into the door. Dustin found himself facing the blonde man alone as he deftly moved to Dustin and delivered a series of kicks into Dustin's stomach then slammed his head into a glass window. His head did not break the glass but it shook his head.

Mike and Suzie struggled under the grip of the larger man. He had them in a death grip but Suzie and Mike had one arm each free. Suzie looked to Mike and they both nodded. Mike used his free arm on one of the large man's eyes and Suzie did the same. The pressure was to

much and he let them go. Both Mike and Suzie grabbed a leg and pulled away and made the large man fall. Two swift kicks to the head knocked him out.

Dustin was having slight trouble with the faster blonde man. He hadn't kept up much with his martial arts training in 5 years. This guy seemed to train everyday. He was delivering fast punches that Dustin was having trouble blocking. Soon he was joined by Mike, and then the two put the blonde on the defensive. The blonde sent a kick at Dustin but Mike caught the leg and threw him through a glass window and knocked him out.

"Well, that was wild." Strauss said. "Hurry to the garage, before they catch up and realize the building has not been locked down." He said. Mike nodded and the group ran out.

### *Garage*

They headed towards the garage but soon realized they were lost. They didn't know this place and soon they thought about grabbing a guard. Their problems became worse as four guards discovered them. Mike motioned for the others to surrender. The trio noticed something off with the guards. The two in the middle were having trouble handling their weapons, but the two at the ends looked like they knew their way around a gun.

The two guards at the end nodded at the trio, before bashing the ends of their rifles into the guards next to them. They fell down quick. Mike breathed a sigh of relief as they removed their balaclavas and revealed Lucas and Will.

"Oh thank God you guys are okay." Mike said pulling them into hugs. Will laughed. "Yea, they came into my apartment and tried to grab Chad. They seemed like a bunch of punks so he kicked their asses." Will explained. It helped Will's boyfriend was also a champion kickboxer.

"Are Max and Harrison okay?" Mike asked Lucas. He nodded. "They left before the apartment was raided. I got a page an hour ago that she made it to Hawkins." He explained. Mike relaxed. He knew Max could handle herself, but he didn't want Harrison involved. Especially

with the threat that Saverio gave.

“We need to reach the garage. We need to leave before they find us again.” Suzie said and the group nodded. Mike and Dustin hid the two guards in a closet and Will led them to the garage properly.

Once they entered, they found several trucks, including a few trucks that looked like they belonged to the power company. “Okay, you get the gate open, we will get a truck started.” Mike said handing the keys to Lucas. He nodded and headed for the gate checkpoint, knocking out the guard at the booth.

Suzie got in the drivers seat of one of the vans while Dustin got in the passenger seat. As Mike was opening the back doors of the van, he was grabbed and thrown into a wall. He looked up and found the Boss standing over him.

“You think I didn’t expect you to come here?” He said. Mike looked over and Saverio had arrived, pointing a gun at him.

“You guys fucked up.” He snarled. Will had gone under the van and moved behind Saverio. He grabbed his legs and pulled him down. The distraction was enough for Mike to get up and rush the Boss. Mike grabbed his shirt and kneed him in the stomach. It winded the Boss and Mike tossed him into a wall.

Will dragged Saverio out into the drive way. Saverio sat up and Will delivered a knee to his face. He was out. He then dragged him to another van and threw him in the back.

Mike and the Boss were trading blows, trying to get an advantage over the other. Will opened a van’s back seat, holding a set of keys he took from the visor. Mike saw it and shoved him to the open door. Will was on his fours as the Boss tripped over him, hitting his head on the roof and falling to the bed of the van. Will got up and the two closed the door. Will hit the lock button before the Boss could open the door.

Mike looked in and saw fury on the Boss’s face. “I hope you know, I will track you down and finish this.” He said. Mike smirked at him. “Good luck.” Mike said. The Boss returned the smirk and saluted him

again with his two fingers to his head. Mike returned the gesture.

"Cmon assholes, WE ARE LEAVING" Dustin yelled as Lucas entered the van. Will and Mike joined them and the van drove off.

They found themselves in downtown Indianapolis. The building looked like an abandoned police station. Mike pulled out the CD he was given by Strauss and handed it to Will. "You keep that safe. Drop me off at a motel. We separate. Call Hopper and tell him to come get us." Mike ordered.

"Why are you leaving?" Lucas asked. "It's me their after. You guys ditch the van as soon as possible." Mike said. "Well, let me come with you." Lucas protested. Mike raised a hand to stop him. "No, I need to keep them focused on me. Just regroup with me. Let's keep in touch old school." Mike said grabbing a radio. Lucas nodded and took the radio from him. "You better not be doing some dumb self sacrifice shit." Lucas said.

"I need to see Harrison graduate high school. We just need to regroup in Hawkins." Mike said as he left the van at a stop sign. Lucas grimaced at him as he left. "Yea, you better stay alive." Lucas said. They didn't worry about being overheard on the radios, Mike and Dustin knew how to set up the radios to keep from being listened by other interested parties.

#### *Holding Facility- Laboratory*

Saverio flipped a table in a fit of rage. He was furious as Wheeler escaped. Jericho was helping with giving Martin medical treatment. One of his eyes got slightly more gouged. He rolled his eyes at the tantrum Saverio was throwing.

"THEY JUST GOT AWAY FROM US. THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED IF YOUR MEN WERE COMPETENT!" Saverio yelled. Jericho looked at him. He got up and shoved Saverio to the wall with one arm.

"You need to accept blame for this as well. I did indeed underestimate him. But your men are untrained and unfit for combat. Now, you will stay out of my way while I handle finding Wheeler."

Jericho said dropping him.

“Mr. Jericho is correct.” The synthesized voice of the robot spoke. They all turned and faced it. “Mr. Alacqua, you will let Mr. Jericho run point on this operation. I will find Mr. Wheeler. Then we will have him.” It said. Jericho gave Saverio a smug look before taking his men out of the room.

“Once the operation is done. Mr. Jericho will be of no further use to us.” It said. Saverio looked at the door that he left through and smiled. “It will be my pleasure” Saverio said.

“Good, begin phase 2” It said.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

Hey guys, Hope you enjoyed the chapter. So, chapter 5 will be the end of act 1, and so Hardware will take a short break while i map out acts 2-3. Also, my job used to be monday-thursday overnight. i start a new job that is thursday-sunday. I will be writing through the week instead of the weekend. Now, if you will excuse me, i need to rest my hands for a few days.

## **5. Chapter 5**

### **Summary for the Chapter:**

Mike has a fateful confrontation with his enemy, but questions will soon be raised.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I know, a new update in a week! See below for another important announcement. oh and AshWinterGrey could use some love. Recently lost all of their stories they had on a flash drive. Go read their works and give some love.

Mike checked into a motel, registering as Ted Hopper, and began looking himself over. He pulled off his shirt and undershirt. His torso was heavily bruised, his face had several cuts and bruises as well. He felt his ribs and was confident they were not broken. Suzie would be able to check him over when they got to Hawkins.

He took a hot shower to soothe his aching wounds and began fiddling with the radio he took from the Department of Energy. He silently wondered what they needed with a holding facility that also had a company of soldiers. He would worry about that in the morning. For now, he was going to get some sleep, and dream of a simpler time.

*July 4<sup>th</sup> 1985*

Mike was sitting on the other end of the closing food court. His friends on the other end were laughing and joking while not noticing that Mike went away. They were all waiting on Steve to get off work and they were meeting Hopper and Joyce at the fair. Mike didn't want to go, he just wanted to mope at home.

Just three days earlier Mike got himself a massive dose of humble pie when a series of events led to El dumping him. He had lied to her because Hopper had been tired of Mike being at the cabin all the time. So Hopper told him to lie to El and stay away for a few days. Sadly, his lie did not hold up to Max Mayfield and it led to El angrily

dumping him. His friends tried to be helpful about this, but Dustin and Will were resentful of him abandoning them all summer, so they had a blowout fight the other day. Mike had not told Nancy about the fight and she dragged him to the mall so they could all meet up and attend Kline's fair.

He looked over and saw El laughing with Max and Steve's coworker Robin. He smiled at seeing her laugh, wishing he was the one making her laugh. He looked away, ashamed of himself. Max and El confronted him about how he kept her all to himself, and he realized he had been selfish. All he wanted was to spend time with El and he didn't even consider he might have been selfish. Will had gotten mad at him for a fight they had while trying to play Dungeons and Dragons, feeling neglected by his friend. Dustin was angry at him for abandoning the party. Lucas had agreed with both of them.

So, Mike sat alone, not wanting to bother his friends. If he could still be called friends. He treated them all like shit and he deserved their anger. Mike looked at his sister making goo goo eyes at Jonathan and felt a slight jealousy at how those two had a fight and managed to resolve it in a few days. He still hadn't been able to speak with El.

Mike got out of his chair and headed for the exit, he was going to walk home. He didn't want to ruin his friend's fun at the fair and he didn't want to make one of the driver's take him home, so he will walk. He was almost out of the food court when a hand grabbed his shoulder. Mike turned around and found Steve stopping him.

"Where ya going Mike?" He asked. He was out of his Scoops uniform and in his regular clothes. Mike shrugged. "I'm just going to head home. I don't feel like celebrating." He said. Steve nodded but didn't let him go. "Yea, I figured as much when Dustin told me about how things were going." He said. "Let's have a little chat." He said leading him back to the food court. He made sure nobody saw them and he sat Mike down with him at a table.

"So what's going on Mike?" Steve asked. Mike merely shrugged. He did not want to have a lecture by Steve Harrington of all people. "Dustin told me you have been a little asshole all summer. I agree, but I haven't had time to talk to you lately. Not that you and I ever talk." Steve said. Mike rolled his eyes, he just wanted to get away

from here.

"Look, I get it. Supergirl over there dumps you and now the whole world sucks but man you can't be a dick to the people who have your back." Steve said. Mike sighed, that was part of the problem. "I was a dick to them before El dumped me. I was a dick to her by keeping her to myself. They don't need me." Mike said. Steve sat back, contemplating his words.

"Look Mike, I get it. Really I do. You were on top of the world with her and nothing was going to bring you down. And then a dose of reality hits you. Why don't you tell them your sorry and go from their?" Steve says. Mike is silent for a moment. "If they will take me back. I should have been a better friend. But you are right, I was a fucking asshole and they all deserved better. El especially." Mike said.

"Then go over their and show them the better person I know you are." Steve says pointing at the group. Mike smiles and nods. "Thanks Steve. I know we never...." Mike says but Steve cuts him off. "Hey, don't mention it. Now go fix your problems." He says. Mike stands up and walks to the table the guys are sitting at.

Lucas looks up and sees him first. Dustin and Will turn around and watch him approach. Mike hesitates slightly but realizes he needs to get this over with. "Hey guys." Mike says. He notices Max is staring at him from her table she is sharing with El and Robin. He hopes she isn't going to start anything now.

"Whats up man?" Lucas asks. Mike breaths in, not knowing what to say but feels he needs to say something. "Guys, you were right. I was a jerk to all of you. Dustin, I shouldn't have left you when you came back into town. Will, you deserve a better friend than I have ever been to you. Lucas, thanks for trying to stick by me." He said. It was a bit fast for them but they knew what he said.

Will was the first to speak. "Look, we all get it. And I should have been a bit more understanding of how you were feeling at the time." Will said. "And while it was a dick move for you to leave to go make out with El, I shouldn't have yelled at you yesterday. We were trying to help and well things got out of hand." Dustin said. Mike nodded,

glad things could improve. Lucas pulled a chair out. "Wanna sit with us?" He asked. Mike shook his head. "I got something I have to take care of." He said motioning to El.

The guys nodded. "Good luck man." Lucas said. The rest nodded their heads and Mike walked towards El's table. As he walked, he noticed Max was missing. Before he wondered where she was, said red head stopped him as he headed to the table. Her gaze was still fierce towards him. Mike would normally be offended by this but he knew she was looking out for El the way Mike wasn't.

"I was hoping to talk to you first." Max said. Mike nodded, he had something to tell her as well. "Yea, I figured." Mike said. She merely nodded. "Look, you kinda got put through the ringer these past few days and I'm not really sorry about that. You needed this. El doesn't need to be controlled. But I do get a bit of where you were coming from. Just, if you do that again, I'll just kick your ass." Max said.

"Thanks Max, for being a good friend to her. She deserves it." Mike said. Max did not expect that, she half expected a fight. "Well, she deserves a good guy also. Why don't you show me that you are one." She said.

"I'll work on it. I know we aren't good friends, but I am glad you had her back." Mike said. She nodded and both walked to El's table.

"Hey Robin, you think you can show me that place where you found that jacket?" Max asked. Robin nodded and as she and El got up, Max stopped her. "I think you two need to talk." Max said. She nodded and sat back down.

Mike sat down next to her, she was looking away from him. His heart hurt. Just a few days ago she couldn't help but look at him. She was beautiful though, wearing a yellow and black checkered shirt and her hair was done up nicely.

"Hey." He said, still nervous. "Hey" She responded, barely any emotion behind it. He almost leaves, but he needs to try.

"Having fun with Max?" He asks, trying to sound good natured. "Yes, she doesn't lie." She says. Mike winces. "Yea, she doesn't lie, unlike

your dumbass ex.” Mike says. She finally looks at him, her eyes are not angry but rather indifferent. He doesn’t know which is worse.

“El, your right. I was selfish, keeping you to myself and just being a jerk to you. I was jealous of you and Max being friends and I said all that stupid stuff. I shouldn’t have lied to you either. I told you ‘friends don’t lie’ and I break my own damn rule.” Mike says. “I’m sorry El, you deserve a lot better.” Mike says.

“I guess they say it’s true that it makes you go crazy.” Mike says. El looks at him questioningly. “What makes you go crazy?” She asks. Mike is now thrown through a loop. “Um....you know...blank makes you crazy?” He asks. She shakes her head. “It’s just um...” Mike begins but something interrupts him.

A loud bang rips through the mall, It comes from one of the shops, and soon, fire is spreading. A moment later, more explosions are ripping through the mall. Fire quickly begins to spread. A large piece of debris falls from the ceiling and Mike pushes El away as it almost lands on them.

“She, what the hell?” Dustin yells. Mike looks around, He saw Robin and Max rushing back to the food court, dodging debris as the mall began shaking from the explosions. “We need to get out of here.” Mike said as he helped El up. She nodded just as an explosion came from Scoops Ahoy. They were next to it, and El used her powers to hold the blast back. Robin did a double take.

“Yea, she has superpowers, but we need to leave.” Steve said as he grabbed her hand headed to the other kids. Nancy and Jonathan were pulling Lucas and Max away while Will, Dustin and Erica went with Steve and Robin. “Mike, El, come on!” Nancy yelled.

“Go, I’ll hold this back.” She said, straining with her powers. “Are you sure?” He asked. She looked at him and gave him a quick smile. “I need you to trust me. I’ll be right behind you.” She said. Mike nodded and joined the others. The explosions were everywhere, Mike rushed over and Nancy pulled him into her arms.

They made it to the entrance just as it collapsed. Mike looked around and saw Billy driving up, Heather getting out of the passenger seat

and they both headed to Max. For once concern was all over his face. “What the fuck is going on?” He asked. Nobody answered as more of the mall exploded. “Wait, Where’s El?” Mike asked.

“I thought she was following you?” Nancy asked. Mike got away from her embrace and headed for an employee exit he and the others used when Steve would sneak them to the movies. Max followed him. “You might need a hand.” She said. Mike nodded. They were having trouble with the door. “Fuck, it’s stuck.” Mike yelled.

“Let me help.” Billy said and he kicked the door open. Mike thanks him and rushes in, Max and Billy behind him. They rush to the food court and see El holding back multiple explosions, most of the food court shops were on fire. Billy was flabbergasted by the sight. “I’ll explain later.” Max said. He merely nodded.

“EL, COME ON, GET OUT OF THERE!” Mike yelled. She looked over, blood pouring out of her face. “Get out of here Mike.” She said back to him. “I can hold it back.”

“EL, YOU’RE THE LAST ONE LEFT, COME HERE PLEASE!” Mike yelled. She turned her attention back to her task. “GODDAMNIT EL I LOVE YOU AND I CAN’T LOSE YOU AGAIN!” He shouted. She turned back to him, shocked, so shocked a piece of the explosion got loose and sent El flying. The rest of the explosions came loose as well and a piece of the ceiling fell on her leg.

Her scream broke Mike’s heart and he rushed towards her, ignoring Billy and Max trying to stop him. He ignored them and the heat that should overwhelm him. He got down on the ground and crawled to her, keeping below the smoke.

“El, are you okay?” He asked once he reached her. She shook her head, in obvious pain. She pointed at the debris on her leg. It may have broken her ankle. Mike began lifting it off but he couldn’t, not with the smoke and how obviously heavy it was. He fell down and grabbed her hand. “I’ll get you out okay?” He told her. She nodded. Billy and Max showed up, both seeing the problem.

“Wheeler, you help me here okay? It’s to much for one person.” Billy said. Mike nodded and they both lifted the piece up while Max pulled

El away. Billy checked her ankle. "Yea, its broken. Lets get her out of here." He said. Mike nodded and he and Max helped her up and the pair rushed towards the door that led to the employee area. The smoke was getting bad, but they believed they could make it out.

The smoke was getting thick and they were all coughing. Soon, they fell to the ground as the smoke got to them. Mike held onto El as he felt himself lose conscience. He looked up and saw a man in a Hawaiian shirt wearing an oxygen mask.

Mike wakes up in the back of an ambulance, wearing a mask that was giving him oxygen. Mike tried to sit up and was stopped by Hopper. A look of concern was on his face. "Easy there Mike. You weren't out that long kid." He said. Mike laid down, feeling short of breath. "What the hell were you thinking?" Hopper asked. He looked down at him disapprovingly. "I couldn't leave El behind." Mike said.

"Yea, she told me. Listen Mike, you and I will talk later, I have a huge mess to clean up, but I think we could have handled things a lot better between us, you agree?" Hopper said. Mike nodded, trying to speak but Hopper put a hand up. "You rest, besides, someone wants to see you." Hopper said as he exited the ambulance.

Mike set up as Hopper helped El walk inside. She sat next to Mike, putting her head on his shoulder. Hopper left, rolling his eyes. They both sat their for a long moment, El taking Mike's hand in hers. "Did you mean it?" She asked simply. Mike took a moment before he answered. "Every word." He said. El smiled and leaned further into him. They just sat their for a long moment. Soon enough, Nancy showed up and pulled both into a massive hug. "God damnit, you both could have fucking died!" She all but shouted. Mike smiled at her as she kept admonishing them both.

Once Nancy left again, Mike looked down and saw El smiling up at him. He leaned forward and kissed her, glad that things were all right with them.

### *Present day*

Mike woke up in the early morning. He was crying, remembering how he truly won her over. He missed her more than he let on to his

friends. Despite Max's best efforts, he still had a massive hole in his heart. He felt deep down she was gone, and it hurt him to no end he could never save her.

The aftermath of the fire was massive. Bruce Lowe, a reporter for the Hawkin's Post, was found by what is regarded as the first explosion point. It turned out he was working for Mayor Kline, who had bankrupted the city in building the mall. Bruce accidentally set off one of the bombs and got himself killed. Kline decided to set the rest off and killed several people still in the mall.

Kline went to prison for the arson and the murders of a few people who were unlucky to escape. Mike heard from Hopper that he killed himself in prison. This was after Hopper had visited him.

Mike used the motel room's coffee pot and made himself a cup. Mike looked out the window and saw a familiar van sitting in the parking lot. He also saw a few members of Bravo Company walking around.

"Shit, they found me." Mike said.

#### *Across town*

Will woke up before Chad, he then made a call to Hawkins. The phone rang for a moment before the gruff voice of Hopper came on. "Hello?" He asked.

"Chief, we need help." Will asked. He could hear Hopper rolling his eyes.

"I'm not the damn Chief kid. What do you need?" He said. Will quickly explained the situation. "Are you god damn serious?" Hopper growled. "I am not in a habit of joking before your morning coffee." Will said. Hopper grumbled. "All right kid, what do you need?" He asked. "Mike is drawing them away, we need you to save his dumbass." Will said.

"What else is new?" Hopper asked, already aware of Mike's antics getting him in trouble. "Okay, I'm getting Harrington and we will be there in a few hours." Hopper said. "Okay, awesome. We will meet you in a few hours." Will said. Hopper grumbled and hung up the

phone.

### *Motel*

Jericho stared at the clerk at the motel check in. He was losing his patience. Somehow the machine located Wheeler and now he was losing time before the kid found out they were there and he vanished.

"I just want to know if this man checked in." Jericho asked through grit teeth. The clerk stood his ground. "Unless you have a warrant I can't tell you anything." He said. Jericho was losing his composure. He pulled out his revolver and pointed it at him. "Here is my fucking warrant. Now, did he check in!" He yelled.

The kid nodded. "Last night, room 145." He said quickly. Jericho smiled. "Thank you for your cooperation." He said as he put the gun back in his back holster. He rallied two of his men, Ford and Lopez, and made his way to room 145.

He kicked the door open and they charged inside. They found nothing, except an open window in the back. It led out to a neighborhood that was densely populated. Jericho checked the coffee pot. It was still warm. "He isn't far. We hunt." Jericho said as he left the room.

He moved out and saw a school that was not open, since it was Saturday and also a cemetery, holding a funeral. Jericho had a good idea of where he went.

### *Southside Cemetery*

Mike blended in with the funeral. He was still dressed like he was going to work, which was a dress shirt and black slacks. So it was slightly dirty from yesterday. He hid away from the mourners and contacted the others on the radio.

"Hey guys, I'm hiding at Southside Cemetery. They found me at the motel I was at. Any word on backup?" Mike asked. A few moments later he got a response.

"Yea, should take him roughly an hour to get here. Hold tight." Lucas said. "Okay, roger that." Mike said.

He hid away from the funeral, but just enough to think he was part of the crowd. He stood under a tree as the pastor was talking about the sudden death of Craig Parchman. He was 73 and had a heart attack was what Mike was able to gather.

He waited twenty minutes before he noticed someone moving on the roof of the funeral home. He was about to make a move to leave but a man grabbed his shoulder and greeted him. “How’s it going Wheeler?” The man said. It was the Bravo Company Boss again. His face was still bruised and he was wearing sunglasses to hide his black eye. But for once he also had a wide smile on his face.

Mike made a move to put a hold on him but a .45 silenced pistol was pointed at him. “Not so fast. I may have orders to not kill you. But I’ll plug you in the belly if you try anything.” He said. “And just to keep you from doing anything stupid. My sniper up their has the widow in his sights.” He said pointing at the roof of the funeral home.

“We will wait for the funeral to end, then you get to play with that machine again. As fun as this has been, I need to get paid.” He said to Mike. Mike breathed in before leaning into the tree. The Boss stood next to him, putting his gun away.

“So, who the hell are you?” Mike asked. The Boss smiled at him. “My name is Charles Jericho. Most people call me Jericho.” He said. Mike nodded at him. They stood together in silence.

“I noticed your d20 tattoo.” Mike said. “Never figured you for a nerd.” Jericho merely shrugged. “Yea, got into D&D back in the seventies. Kept it up even in military service. Played as a paladin.” He explained. Mike almost rolled his eyes.

“Yea, that’s my class also.” Mike said. Jericho snorted. “I hope you don’t think our similarities will save you.” He said. It was Mike’s turn to snort. “No, just trying to pass the time.” Mike said. “Why, you think your going somewhere?” Jericho asked.

“You never know.” Mike said. “Hrm... Well, if its any comfort. If it weren’t for the fact you are marked for death, I would be trying to recruit you.” Jericho said. Mike wasn’t surprised, he had been approached several times by recruiters. “Well, I’d probably refuse. I

have a son to look out for.” Mike said. Jericho nodded. “Well, not all of us are childless. But I do see your point.” He said. The funeral was dispersing and Jericho saw one of Saverio’s black vans arrive.

“Well, guess this is it.” Mike said. Jericho merely nodded and pulled out his revolver in his back holster. He then handed it to Mike. “One paladin to another. I won’t interfere in this. My job is done.” He said. Mike took the weapon and Jericho handed him a couple of speed loaders. “Good luck.” He said as he walked away to join his men.

Mike looked around, lots of small tombstones, a few mausoleums in the side. Then they’re was the funeral home. He saw a figure enter the cemetery. All black, even a black trench coat, it’s fists were armored, along with it’s knees and wearing black combat boots.

It was moving slowly, almost like it was anticipating the fight. Mike put Jericho’s gun in his back belt. It walked up to Mike. “Good morning Mr. Wheeler.” It said. Mike felt familiar with the synthesized voice. “Well, let’s get this over with.” Mike said. “Yes, I have another appointment to deal with.” It said.

Mike did not expect how fast it was. It grabbed Mike’s head and delivered a powerful headbutt. Mike was dazed as it delivered a powerful kick and knocked him back. Mike tried to run away but he was grabbed by the back of his head and slammed him to the ground

The machine walked around him, he could hear a faint laughter coming from it. “Mr. Jericho and his men had trouble with you. I gained upgrades to adapt to you. It seems they were not needed.” It said. Mike groaned and got up. It delivered a punch and Mike deflected it to his right, then punched by its other fist. Mike staggered back. It delivered another punch and Mike barely blocked it.

The machine sent a powerful roundhouse kick, and Mike ducked it and tried to trip it. Once his leg connected, it didn’t move. Mike rolled out of the way before the outstretched leg came down on him. They found themselves close to the funeral home, The machine grabbed Mike and threw him through the window.

Mike barely got up from the floor when he was suddenly flung out the door as the machine marched towards him, Mike broke out into a

run, heading towards the mausoleums. As he hid by one, he began catching his breath. He saw a shovel nearby and grabbed it. He waited for the machine to arrive, but when he looked to see if it was following him, he saw it was gone.

When he turned around it was there, right beside him. Mike jumped back and hit the machine in its head. The shovel broke and it didn't faze the machine. It delivered a powerful kick to Mike and he fell to the ground.

Mike was crawling away as he heard the machine laugh. "I am so disappointed in you Mr. Wheeler. I thought you would have more fight in you." It said. Its voice wasn't synthesized anymore, and it sounded very human. "Dr. Brenner?" Mike asked. The cold laugh came through. "Yes, how do you like the upgrade?" He asked.

"You're a little shorter than normal." Mike said as he got up. Brenner laughed even more. "This is just the beginning, wait till you see what else I can do." Brenner said. "I am the future." And then, objects began to float.

### *Jericho*

He was watching the fight, well more like a beating, from the edge of the cemetery. When Mike ran towards the mausoleums, he asked his sniper to confirm what was going on. "Weatherford, what do you see?" He asked. A moment later a voice came from the radio. "Boss, shit's floating." He said. Jericho asked for a repeat. "Boss, I say again, shit's floating."

### *Mike*

It had been a long time since Mike saw anything float, it was 1986 to be exact. And here it was, Dr. Brenner was making things float. An 86 year old man somehow in fighting shape and much shorter than he usually was, he was making things float. Mike was internally freaking out. Soon, parts of stone were being fired at him. Mike barely had time to scramble away.

He got back to the main cemetery area and soon, headstones were being lifted up. Violently they were being slammed at him. Mike

barely was able to avoid them. He was scrambling to escape as Brenner began chasing him, slamming headstones near him. Mike made it to one of the walls surrounding the cemetery, a short four foot wall. He was almost at the wall, certain Brenner would catch him. As he reached the wall, a large man in a grey beard jumped from the other side, pointing a shotgun. Mike ducked down and the man fired. Brenner took a full blast and went backwards, rolling down the hill.

"Hopper? You got here fast." Mike said as Hopper grabbed his hand and helped him up. Soon, automatic fire is directed at them. "We'll talk later. Let's get out of here." Hopper said. They ran away to the street. As they were running, they both heard a voice calling out to them. "Mike? Dad? Please help." It sounded familiar to Mike, who stopped to see Brenner still on the ground. "Come on Wheeler, we are leaving!" Hopper shouted.

They ran and headed to a waiting van, the side door opened up to reveal Robin Buckley returning fire to the mercenaries. Both Mike and Hopper dived inside and quickly the door closed. Mike looked and saw Steve at the drivers seat. "Cmon Harrington, floor it." Hopper yelled. They all fell over as they Steve hit the gas and drove off.

### *Jericho*

They were rushing to where Wheeler had escaped with the ancient looking lumberjack. Jericho saw them escape in a white van. As they neared the escaping van, Jericho saw the machine breathing. He thought it was a robot or something. But he saw it was in obvious distress. He kneeled down next to it and tried to remove the helmet. It was stuck but Jericho noticed a kind of visor on the helmet. His men stopped to see what he was doing.

Jericho pulled out a pocket knife and found the edge of the visor. "Relax, I'm getting this off of you." He said. The machine placed a hand on his arm. It seemed to be looking for comfort. Jericho placed the blade in the edge of the visor and with a little effort, he was able to put his fingers inside and pull the visor off.

Inside was a face. It was a girl, with bright brown doe eyes. She

reached out to him. "Please, help me." She said, tears brimming on her face. Jericho reached his hand out to her when pain wracked her body. He saw that around her neck was a shock collar as it lit up. Jericho looked up and saw Saverio approaching them, with armed guards. They quickly surrounded them, and for once Jericho believed they were well trained. "Put your weapons down NOW!" Saverio shouted. He nodded to his men as he put his hands up. They were surrounded and outnumbered. He took one last look at the girl in the suit before they were dragged away. "What the hell is going on." He said

*Mike*

Robin was helping patch up his wounds. "It's been a while since we had you like this Wheeler." She said as she cleaned the blood from his face. They met up with the others in a parking garage, Suzie was on her laptop looking at the disc that Mike gave her yesterday. She looked through the files, shock overtaking her face.

"Mike, guys, you need to look at this." She said as she showed them the screen. Mike looked up. "What the hell?"

## **END OF ACT 1**

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

End of act 1. I know i left you guys with a cliffhanger and it might be a while before i update this. Hardware is going on hiatus for two reasons. the first being i need to figure out the next couple of acts, the second is because i am getting burned out on writing. 'Whats wrong' might also be sparsely updated because i got half of one page done and i am just not feeling it like i usually do. I love both of these stories, don't get me wrong but i need to recharge and find some more inspiration. I am not leaving like i originally planned a few months ago, I will still be reading and commenting, but i want to make sure i deliver good quality writing and not just rushing things out. I do hope you guys read and review and

enjoy.

## 6. chapter 6

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hey, sorry this took forever. I have had an interesting few months. I detailed a few life events in What's Wrong with our Kids, but suffice to say, my step dad passed away in December, I needed to move and get settled. I was going to finish What's Wrong but I felt this story has waited long enough. Also, give my new story Baal some love as well. I am very proud of how that's coming along.

*5 years ago*

Mike and the others gathered at Nancy's house. She was working in Chicago as a reporter when she got the call from her brother. It was a simple 5 second call, "We found her, we are on our way", And now she had several people checking weapons in her home. Max and Lucas were checking over a pair of shotguns while being disgustingly cute. Suzie was putting together a med pack in case things got dicey for them. Dustin was at the computer station with Mike's roommate, a close friend of his named Dane.

He was the same age as Mike, about as tall as Dustin, with brown hair cut to his ears. He had a look of someone who barely slept. Nancy felt something was off about him. But Mike trusted him, and that was good enough for her. He was using her printer to bring up a map of a building. "These are the schematics I found." Dane said. Dustin took the paper and placed it on the coffee table. Mike looked it over as the others gathered around. Nancy mused that it looked like one of their old Dungeons and Dragons campaigns.

Mike looked it over, placing figures around the map. He looked over other papers, ones that had guard schedules and when Dr. Brenner would be in. Mike wanted that to be a day. He had a score to settle with the bastard. "Okay, let's go over the plan." He said. He grabbed a ranger and rogue figure. "Lucas, you and Max will provide overwatch. You're the best shots in the group." The pair nodded as Lucas picked up a sniper rifle that he got from Hopper earlier in the

week. Picking up a bard and cleric figure, "Will and Dustin will watch this door" he said placing the figures by a side door. "That's where Brenner likes to leave out of. Keep him there if he escapes." The pair nodded. Picking up a knight and elven archer figure, along with a bear figure and vampire figure. "Myself, Nancy, Hopper and Suzie, we will go in and assault the place. It's far away from the city and no chance of the police showing up." Mike said.

Hopper grabbed a water and chugged it down. He was anxious. When he got the call from Mike that him and his college roommate found one of Brenner's labs in Chicago and this was the main one, he gathered other items needed. They had plans to leave the country once the operation was over. Doc Owens was going to provide some logistical support and he might be able to arrange for help on El's mental state.

Jonathan was out of town, otherwise he would be with the infiltration team and Steve was helping the county sheriff with a missing person's case. The team they had though, was ready. Hopper looked over at Mike and despite him being confident, he still looked like a nervous wreck. He walked up and put his hand on Mike's shoulder. "Mike, you are doing good kid. Now let's go get her back," He said. Mike looked up, his nervousness left him and steely resolve replaced it. He nodded to Hopper and caught a rifle that Lucas tossed to him.

As they began prep, Max walked up to Mike and asked him to talk in private. They moved off to a side room. "What's up Max?" Mike asked. She gave him a smile. "Look, you have been looking to this for a decade. El should be very lucky that someone is as devoted as you. But I just want this out of my system before this ends." Max said and she kissed him.

It wasn't the usual pecks she gave the others, but one of the deep and passionate ones Mike usually spotted she would give Lucas either after they made up from a fight or just because they felt like it. Once it was over she looked at his surprised face. "Thank you." She said as she walked out. Mike merely stood their flabbergasted.

Mike always suspected that Max liked him. Usually she went to him when her and Lucas would fight. But Mike always considered her a

friend. Once he got over his shock, he left the room and the group loaded in the van. Dane decided to stay behind and keep the home fires burning.

The van made a stop at the building opposite the lab to let out Max and Lucas then parked in a nearby alley. The group piled out then split off to hit their points.

Mike, Nancy, Suzie and Hopper made their way to the door and got into a breaching position. The front faced a street, but if the road was clear. They pulled out their rifles, while Hopper pulled out a shotgun. "We breach in three....two.....one, GO." Hopper shouted as he kicked the door open. The four rushed inside, expecting to surprise several guards.

Only to find, the guards were already dead. The front foyer looked like someone attacked them. Multiple wounds were all over the bodies of the guards. "What the hell happened here?" Hopper asked.

"Maybe Owens?" Nancy asked. Hopper shook his head. "After Brenner got his position back ten years ago, Owens has been person non grata with the government." Hopper explained as they made their way through the lab complex. It looked like a massive battle took place, bullets casings were everywhere. Hopper took point as they found the main lab complex.

They found the main lab complex to be a massacre. All of the white coated scientists were dead. A man with a large grey beard was dead on a table, a note was lain on top of him. It had Mike's name on it.

As Mike grabbed it, he saw it was a file on Subject Eleven, and a note from Brenner. The note was cold and strait to the point.

### *Mr. Wheeler*

*If you are reading this, I told you I was monitoring you. All these deaths are your fault. They were sanitized as a result of you poking your nose where it didn't belong. And much more distressing, Subject Eleven had to be disposed of. I leave you the file on the progress we made. Don't try to use it to bring me down. I can still reach your family.*

*Dr. Martin Brenner.*

Mike slumped to the ground. Hopper looked over the note and his face contorted with rage. He let out a massive howl of anger and fired his shotgun at some lab equipment. Nancy looked at the file and found the sanitation order. “We were a day late. This happened yesterday.” She said. Suzie looked through the cabinets and found all the paperwork was gone. All the computers were destroyed. “These guys are effective, I’ll give them that.” She said under her breath.

“*Paladin, what’s your status? Over.*” Will asked over the radio. Hopper picked up his own radio. “Mission aborted. We were to late kid.” He said as he sat down next to Mike. Both had tears in their eyes. Nancy joined them, her heart breaking as her brother broke down for the second time since this happened.

An hour later, they were at Nancy’s house. Dane was at the dinner table, with a curious look on his face. “That didn’t take long.” He said. Mike sat down at the table, dejected. Lucas had a hand on his shoulder, looking morose.

“So, was Dr. Ivey with the bodies? Big man with a black beard.” Dane asked. The group all looked at him and he had a large smile on his face. “I liked him, but lessons need to be made.” Dane said. Hopper was growling at this point. “Who the hell are you?” Hopper demanded. Dane began humorlessly laughing. “Just an operative to keep an eye on you. I kept trying to throw Mike off the scent but clever bastard found it. Well, he had help from that bitch Suzie.” Dane said, earning a glare from Suzie and Dustin. “Once Mike found the lab, I called the good doctor and he sanitized it yesterday. He told me your precious El was crying for you when they burned her up with a flamethrower.” Dane said laughing. Mike was now seething with rage, the betrayal making him see red. “All that work, and you lost.” He said.

His laughter was cut short as a bullet went between his eyes and he fell back from his chair onto the floor. Max glared at him as she put her pistol back into its holster. “Fuck you.” She said to the dead man.

The group shared her sentiments.

### *The present*

Mike looked at the video and saw the massive scientist with a black beard, Dr. Ivey, was explaining the Cyber Program. "Subject Eleven, after being physically and mentally conditioned, is fitted with enhancements. These are combat conditions and extreme pain resistance. The helmet connects It to the central hub and can have the Subject be controlled directly." Ivey explained. Mike couldn't see El, just the helmet of the cyborg he fought. "We now begin the test." Ivey said as the scientists begin pushing buttons and flipping switches. The cyborg on the table began screaming. It was a haunting sound that Mike had nightmares about for years after El was taken.

Once the screaming stopped, it was replaced by laughter. It was cold laughter. "I worked!" The cyborg said. "Phase one works!" It said. El's voice was coming out of the machine. "I will work on fixing the helmet's voice modulator, but I can feel myself through Subject Eleven." It said. Dr. Ivey looked on proudly. The cold laughter continued. "I received word we have been discovered. Thank you, Dr. Ivey, but your services are no longer needed." It said as it pulled a guard's gun with telekinesis and began shooting around the room. The video cut off at that moment.

Mike was shocked as Hopper handed him a water. "El was alive the whole time. Brenner tricked us. Of fucking course he wasn't going to kill her when his fucked up experiment worked." Mike said. Suzie nodded. "He mentioned phase one. I am still digging in the files, but phase two looks at turning a person's brain waves into normal human bodies." She explained. The group was horrified at the thought. "Brenner is a mad man." Robin said.

### *Department of Energy holding facility*

Jericho sat in the interrogation room, his wrists were cuffed behind him. Saverio had his men arrested once they saw the face inside the helmet. Apparently that was national security. Jericho decided he would play along.

Saverio entered the room, looking smug, as he took a seat opposite Jericho. "Well, it looks like you still have a few uses left." He said. Jericho tilted his head to the side, curious about what he was talking

about. "We lost Wheeler and his friends van. But we know you can find it. However, this time you will be answering directly to me." Saverio explained. Jericho rolled his eyes and Saverio gave a laugh. "You could refuse and you and your men will be executed. Now are you going to be a good little dog and play nice?" Saverio said. Jericho looked long and hard at the man across from him. "Who is she?" He asked. Saverio smiled. "Not a she, that's an it. Not a person. Government property. Also classified." He said. Jericho glared at him while he considered his options. After a moment he decided. "I have a score to settle with Wheeler. But make no mistake. Once I am done with him, you are next." Jericho said. Saverio smiled. He liked that answer.

Jericho made his way to the cell blocks where his men were waiting. "We have another chance. Get ready to move in five." He ordered. His men nodded and headed for the armory. All except for Lopez, who indicated he wanted a word. Jericho nodded and he pair walked into the guard room.

"What the hell was that Charles?" Lopez demanded. He rarely used Jericho's first name. "I don't know. But I have a plan. Do you have my back Lopez?" Jericho asked. Lopez still had an intense look on his face but he nodded. "Always Jericho." He said. "Good. Because once we are done with this, we are fucking over Dr. Brenner hard core." Jericho said.

### *Parking garage*

Steve walked up to Hopper, his anxiousness was all over his face. "What are we going to do?" He asked. Hopper shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I think we need to head to Hawkins. Put the battle on our terms." He said. Steve ran both hands through his hair. "I suppose you're right. But we need to get out of here now. No telling when those troops will catch up." Steve said. Hopper nodded. Robin and Suzie walked up to the pair. "We need to split up, take different cars." Robin said. "But this is my van." Steve complained. "We can get it later. Besides, the Chief shouldn't have a child molester van." Robin said.

Mike was already hard at work hotwiring a truck when Steve walked up to him. "Wheeler, you seriously still walking around after that ass

kicking?” Steve said. Mike shrugged his shoulders. “We need to get safe. Once we are out of the woods, I’ll rest.” Mike said. Steve couldn’t argue with that.

Soon, they were all situated in vehicles and heading out in various directions, heading to Hawkins.

Jericho arrived a few moments later. Using city cameras he found the van entered this parking garage. This one had no cameras so tracking them will be difficult. “The van is registered to Steve Harrington, Chief of Police of Hawkins.” Smiley said. Jericho laughed, he might not need to look to hard where they were going. “That big fucker who helped Wheeler escape, who was he?” He asked Smiley. He looked at his notes before finding the page. “Jim Hopper, mayor of Hawkins.” Jericho began thinking. “They will go back, just to make the fight home turf. Tell Saverio that’s were we are headed.” Jericho said.

“No need, I am here.” Saverio said as he arrived with several guards. “If they are headed to Hawkins, give me some time to get some troops together. They won’t go anywhere.” Saverio said. Jericho shook his head. “The longer we wait, the more entrenched they will be. And Wheeler gave us a problem when he wasn’t prepared.” Jericho said. Saverio smiled. “I have a few surprises in store for Mr. Wheeler. And you don’t give the orders anymore.” He said as he walked out. Jericho glared as he walked out.

Martin came out of the command trailer and walked up to Jericho. “Boss, you got a personal call.” He said quietly. Jericho nodded and headed inside. He put the phone to his ear.

“Charles, it’s Sam. He’s becoming unruly. I am having a hard time taking care of him.” The voice came. It was Jericho’s sister Emily. “Look, I am kind of in the middle of something. Can’t you take care of him?” Jericho asked. “He is asking for you. You’re his favorite.” Emily said. Jericho groaned. “Okay, you two still in Indianapolis?” He asked. She said yes and told him they were at a park. “I’ll swing by.” Jericho said and he hung up the phone. “If we need to sit tight, I guess I can handle a short errand.” Jericho said to himself.

*Road out of Indianapolis.*

Mike and Will drove in a truck, Will keeping look behind them as he checked if they were being pursued. He saw nobody. "Should be a few hours before we get to Hawkins. So what do we do?" Will asked. "I have a plan, you need to tell me how bad it is." Mike said.

### *Chicago*

Nancy was writing a piece on human trafficking in massage parlors when her desk phone rang. "Nancy Wheeler speaking." She said. "Hey, it's me." The voice of Jonathan came over the phone. Nancy breathed in. Her and Jonathan were separated after a fight they had a month ago. "What do you need Jon?" She asked, sounding testy. Jonathan sounded different, like this wasn't about them. "I got a call from Will. He said it's a code red. We need to get back to Hawkins." He said. "I dunno if you want to ride with me but..." Jonathan was cut off. "Let me get my bag. Pick me up in twenty." Nancy said as she hung up the phone. Code red's were reserved for danger and needed to be addressed quickly. After all, a party member required assistance.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Sorry for how short this was, but not every chapter will be action packed and full of danger. So i have a couple of things to talk about.

1. Hopper lives....because of course he did. I kinda figured with how coy they were being about his death. They picked that up from Game of Thrones and that annoys me. I would usually prefer silence over trying to be clever.
2. I am not going to update this in the same way. A lot of my motivation is limited so I will update when I can. I do appreciate feedback and love hearing from ya'll.

## **7. update**

Hey everyone, I apologize for not getting new chapters done. I just haven't been feeling like writing lately. I changed jobs a few times, dealing with the dumpster fire that is 2020, and generally just feel blah. I dunno how to get over this burnout feeling but i will try to begin writing again. I do thank you all for the love shown to my work, especially the giant surprise that is "What's Wrong with our Kids"

## 8. chapter 7

### Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for the long delay. Life kind of got weird and burnout was a real pain in the ass. Like, i barely liked reading Stranger Things fanfic. But i saw it was past a year since I wrote this and i owe it to myself and my readers to finish.

### Chapter 7

Most assumed Jericho's name was fake or even some form of code name, but the secret brilliance about it was that was indeed his real Christian name. Jericho was a genuine article, right down to his own identity. He found himself driving out to a park near the Indianapolis suburbs. The ride was rough due to rush hour starting. He found the park where his siblings were and he parked himself in the parking lot.

Walking out, he saw a familiar brunette standing a fair distance from the playground. She was wearing jeans and a tshirt, while Jericho was still wearing his combat gear, just keeping a pistol hidden on him though. He carefully walked up to the woman and spoke softly "How long has he been here?" He asked. The woman carefully turned to him, a glare on her face. "Three hours. I have been trying to get a hold of you." She said.

"Sorry, had a bit of an issue." Jericho said. The woman turned to a young man sitting at a sandbox. He was about 12, wearing a bright orange shirt and black shorts. Jericho crossed his arms as he looked on.

"Has it been bad?" He asked. She merely nodded. "He misses you. You act more like Dad." She said. Jericho looked to her, "Em, I can't do my job and parent him." Jericho said.

"Well Charles, you might need to look at your life decisions more!" She snapped at him. Jericho snarled back, "My job pays the bills, keeps us fed, keeps a roof over us, keeps Sam's medical bills in

check.” Emily turned away, not wanting to fight anymore. “He still would rather have you.” She said. Jericho nodded, feeling bad for snapping at his sister.

His brother was born to parents already to old to be raising a child. He was born with some mental issues, namely autism. His parents couldn’t handle him and dropped him off at a firehouse when he was 4. Jericho spent a week searching for him and when he located him, he tried to force his parents to take him back. They responded by slamming the door in his face. Both Jericho and his siter have not spoken to their parents in years.

“I’m sorry I leave him with you like this.” Jericho said. Emily merely nodded. “He made some great progress recently. But I think he wanted to show you.” She said. Jericho shook his head. “This job is complicated. I dunno if I will make it out.” Jericho said. Emily looked at him with shock. “It’s okay, I have a damn good life insurance policy.” Jericho said. Emily shook her head. “I don’t care about the money, I would rather have you around.” She said. Jericho nodded. He then walked over to his brother.

He sat down next to him, and saw his brother working on an art project. “Hows it going Sam?” Jericho asked the young man. Sam did not look up, drawing what seemed to be in front of him. “I made something, I needed to show you. I’m sorry I frustrated Emily.” Sam said, not breaking his contact with the drawing. Jericho looked at him curiously. Occasionally Sam would ‘see’ things and draw them. Jericho kept that a secret from his men. Hell he usually didn’t believe in psychics, until today when he saw someone making things fly with their mind.

“Yea, sorry bud, I have been having a hectic day.” Jericho said. He was sounding non-chalant, but sometimes Sam made predictions that came true in his drawings. Sam kept working while Jericho sat with him in the sandbox. Eventually Sam stopped drawing and put his work pad down. “It’s in my backpack. I think you need to see it.” Sam said. Jericho nodded and grabbed the bag. He opened it and pulled out one of Sam’s drawings.

The picture was of the girl from earlier, still looking at him, pleading for help. Jericho looked up at his brother. “When did you see this?”

He asked. Sam looked at him, or at least as close as he could. “After you left for the day. She still needs your help.” He said.

“Have you seen anything else?” Jericho asked. Sam nodded. “You were followed here.”

Saverio was sitting by a park bench when he noticed Jericho walk away from the kid. He was under orders to grab this one at some point, but Jericho could be very crafty. But considering he heard a story from the kids parents about him seeing things got Dr. Brenner interested. “Just got to monitor this one. Hopefully Jericho will be dead.” Saverio muttered to himself. As he wondered where Jericho vanished, he felt a gun on the back of his head.

“What part of personal time eludes you?” Jericho snarled. Saverio put his hands on his lap, he needed to play cool. “Look, I was just curious. You can’t expect me to not learn about an employee.” He said. Jericho was not amused.

“I am a contractor, not an employee. Once this job is done, I leave and will never work for you or Dr. Brenner ever again. And if you come near my family ever again, there will not be a crack you could hide from me.” Jericho said. Saverio nodded, wishing he did bring a small assault team. He felt the gun leave the back of his head and when he looked over, Jericho was already headed for his car.

### *Mike*

Will drove as Mike detailed his plan. “Your sure it will work?” He asked. Mike nodded. “It’s the only way.” He said. Will sighed, the plan was batshit crazy, but he couldn’t think of another way. “Well, we should have backup coming. I called Jonathan. He should be bringing Nancy.” Will said. Mike nodded, glad to have the extra firepower. “Well, when we get to Hawkins, I’ll call Max. Hopefully Susan can watch Harrison for a bit.” Mike said.

“She should, you know how she loves playing grandma.” Will said. “Yea, and how her and my mom love to fight about who is the better grandma.” Mike chuckled, remembering how the pair would one up each other on gifts for Harrison.

Mike was glad for Will on his side. Through all their adventures, Mike was glad to have him be the sound board he needed. They had a rough patch years ago, but nothing solidified their bond after a fight in the gym their sophomore year

*Hawkins High Gym, years ago*

Mike got out of the shower and was getting dressed when he saw the group approach Will. Mike could only get his shorts on when he heard the taunting.

“So Byers, I saw you looking at my friend here earlier. You like him you little faggot?” One of the larger boys sneered. The other boy, one who Mike suspected was the one Will was spying on, also spoke.

“Yea Byers, you want my cock in you?” The boy laughed. Will just looked embarrassed while shaking his head. The other boys began shoving Will around till one punched him in the face.

“Hey assholes! Need 5 guys to beat one person up?” Mike yelled. The others stopped and looked at Mike. Anger blazed in his eyes. “What are you going to do about it Wheeler?” One of the boys said.

Mike didn’t answer, and instead ran forward and used his body length to tackle 4 of the boys back. He got up quickly and rushed the one still standing. The boy tried to run but Mike grabbed the back of his shirt and flung him to the ground.

As Mike was punching the boy, the others got up and rushed Mike. Before he knew it, both he and Will were being beaten down while someone was yelling slurs at them.

Hopper walked into the Principals office and saw both boys, heavily bruised and bleeding, but both seemed all right. The Principal, a small accountant looking man named Mr. Moran, was behind his desk, glaring at both of them. Hopper was never a fan of Will getting in fights, but this seemed unprovoked.

“All right, where are the other kids at?” Hopper asked. Mr. Moran looked up at him with surprise. “Well, they are in class. They were defending themselves from these two deviants.” Moran said while

glaring at Mike and Will. Hopper looked confused. “The hell are you talking about?” Hopper asked.

Moran got up from his desk and spoke to Hopper in the lobby. Mike looked over at Will, who was shaking. Mike put a hand on his shoulder. “Hey, it’s going to be ok. Hopper isn’t a mouthbreather.” Mike said, trying to reassure his friend.

A few moments later, Hopper came back in, fuming. “All right you two, come with me.” Hopper said in his Chief voice. Mike noticed Hopper glaring at Mr. Moran, who seemed to be slightly scared of Hopper’s glare.

The ride was silent. Hopper kept his signature glare while Will was still shaking. Mike felt uncomfortable in the truck. “I’ll try and smooth things over with your mom, but you Mike are on your own.” Hopper said. Mike merely shrugged, His parents were not surprised by his antics.

“So that asshole principal didn’t punish the other kids because he believed you to be a freak. Oh I can’t wait to tell Joyce that. Just love to hear her go off.” Hopper said with a slight smile.

“It’s true though. I am a freak” Will said. Mike looked over at him and saw tears running down his face. “One of those boys, Chris, I thought he was very handsome. I think there is something wrong with me. Cause I like boys.” Will said. For a moment, Hopper had a look of pure fury on his face as he pulled the car on the side of the road. He turned in the backseat and faced Will.

“You listen here William Byers, you are not a god damned freak and if you wanna love who you wanna love then I will support you 100 god damn percent. Your my son and I love you. Do I make myself clear?” Hopper growled. Will nodded and began crying more openly. Hopper left out the front seat and went to the back and gave Will a massive hug. Mike joined in after a moment, accepting his friend.

### *Present day*

Mike remembered Joyce gave Mr. Moran one hell of an earful. Hell the kids who attacked them also got an earful. Just goes to show you

don't screw with Joyce Byers kids. Well, Joyce Hopper now.

As they made their way into the Hawkins city limits, Mike's radio went off. "Mike, it's Nancy. We flew in as quick as we could. Do you need anything?" She asked. Mike took the radio from Will. "Yea, I need you to get a CD for me." Mike said. Will looked at Mike with a curious expression. "Trust me, I have an idea."

### *Jericho*

Jericho and his men were in their trucks heading for Hawkins. Wheeler and his friends have a massive head start, but It will be all the sweeter when they catch up. Saverio decide to ride with his men, bunch of untested boy scouts in his mind. "Our orders are to isolate Wheeler and let Dr. Brenner finish him off. He is adamant about that." Lopez said. Jericho merely nodded as he began re reading Wheeler's file. He needed to know what the connection between Wheeler and Brenner was. Hopefully he will find out soon.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Hope you all enjoyed it. I have a few plans for this for its eventual endgame. Now, one main reason I got burned out, was it really felt like nobody was reading it. I am still tempted to delete Baal due to lack of interest from both myself and the audience. But I think I should keep going.

## **9. chapter 8**

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I made a new chapter within two weeks! Yay motivation. I would have gotten this done sooner but last week i was exhausted and this week i had other stuff going on. Hope you enjoy

### **Chapter 8**

#### *Department of Energy Top Secret Lab: Project Argus*

In a secret facility hidden in the forests of Illinois, a doctor made a house call. Dr. Hugh Ryan entered the facility through one of it's many underground parking garages. He was buzzed through by the checkpoint and parked his Mercedes in a spot reserved for medical personnel. He grabbed his briefcase and headed for the elevator that took him to his patient.

The large office was just as blank and sterile as the last time he was here. Lots of medical equipment adorned the room, and a hospital bed. Sitting in the hospital bed was Dr. Ryan's sole patient, a wizened old man who's white hair long fell out, breathing through an oxygen machine, and still scanning him with his piercing blue eyes.

"Secretary Brenner, I have your test results." Dr. Ryan said to him. The man merely nodded as Dr. Ryan pulled out his files. Brenner put away his own files and gave the doctor his complete attention.

"The experiments you have performed over the past five years have taken their toll on you. Your chart says that if you stop the experiment you may live for another six or seven years. But if you keep this up, you may not make it till the end of the year." Dr. Ryan said handing the file to Brenner. He put his own glasses on and looked over the files.

Brenner smiled as he finished reading. "Thank you, Dr. Ryan. Your concern is admirable. But I am on the cusp of my greatest

achievement.” Brenner said with a wheeze. Dr. Ryan shook his head, this damned fool has been playing God for years.

“Well, its up to you. I also have to tell you the President is tired of dealing with your aides. He is demanding you meet with him.” Dr. Ryan said. Brenner snorted. “That country fool would not be in his office without me. He can wait like all the others.” Brenner said. Dr. Ryan shrugged as he checked Brenner’s vitals, which are still good despite his deteriorating health.

“May I ask why you never fully moved into Subject Eleven’s body?” Dr. Ryan asked. Brenner frowned at him. “It’s will is still very strong. The longer I try to assert total control, the more powerful its will. Also, certain things trigger it to toss me out. That’s why it is fitted with a shock collar. Just to keep it from escaping in the field.” Brenner explained.

“My goal is not to take Eleven’s body. That is merely phase one.” Brenner said. “And what is the next phase?” Dr. Ryan asked. Brenner smiled coldly and showed him an image on his computer. Dr. Ryan focused on it and had a look of shock. “It will take time, and many calculations. But my endgame is approaching.” Brenner said.

“This might just work. You might need an intermediary to make this work though.” Dr. Ryan said. Brenner nodded. “I am working on that.” Brenner said. Dr. Ryan nodded, he knew better than to question his methods. He had a few painful reminders buried in a family cemetery.

“Now, if there is nothing else, I need to get back to work.” Brenner said. Dr. Ryan nodded and left the office.

Once he was gone, Brenner grabbed his phone and dialed a number. The phone rang twice before being answered. “Yes, Dr. Brenner.” Saverio said. Brenner smiled, Saverio was his most loyal employee, a remnant of his strike team he used fifteen years ago to apprehend Subject Eleven.

“I need a progress report.” Brenner said. Saverio took a breath. “Jericho tracked him to Hawkins. I am taking a couple of platoons of soldiers, with another unit of men in reserve. And I have men on that

other project. It's just a woman and kid, so we can take them easily." Saverio said. Brenner nodded. "Very good. I have another assignment for you. It also concerns Mr. Wheeler." Brenner said.

### *Saverio*

"Yes sir, I understand. I won't fail you." Saverio said as he hung up the phone. He looked around the massive RV and saw his men staring at him. Most were untested soldiers, but their numbers should do well. Saverio looked to a soldier, "Corporal, you take two men to this address once we get a CP set up. Don't fuck it up." Saverio said handing him a paper. The man nodded and selected three men.

Saverio pondered his tasks, he will succeed and before dawn, the world will change

### *Mayor residence*

The cars pulled into the driveway of the massive three story mansion, built by the former corrupt mayor Larry Cline, and the group headed for the entrance. As they came to the door, a blur of red sped out and crashed into Lucas.

"Thank God you are safe" Max said hugging Lucas. Mike looked bemused at the reunion. Max then turned to Mike and also hugged him. "Harrison is with my mom, so hopefully that's a safe place." She said. "Well, they are looking for me." Mike said.

The group entered the manor and were all greeted by Joyce. The years were very kind to her as she still had infinite motherly affection and she was one of the best shots in Hawkins. "Well, we haven't had a situation like this in a while." Joyce said. "Yea I just wanted a reunion tour. Ya know have another adventure before I turn thirty." Mike said hugging Joyce.

"Yea its all fun and games hen the government gets involved." Hopper said ushering the group into the sitting room. Once upon a time, this room reflected Mayor Cline, gaudy and greedy. Joyce changed it to look more rustic and comfortable. While Joyce and Hopper technically lived there in the residence, they still preferred to stay out in the cabin. Despite the heartbreak, it was still their home.

"So, you have some form of plan, Mike?" Jonathan asked. Mike nodded. "I have the beginnings of one. I need Will and Dustin to get some audio equipment. And I also need the plans for the old steel factory." Mike said. He then laid out his grand plan.

After spending forty minutes explaining the plan, the group was in agreement. "Ok, I'll get stuff ready. Steve, try and keep your officers away from these places. I don't think I want them in harms way." Mike said getting his jacket on. Steve nodded and gave him a thumbs up.

Max went into the kitchen and prepared a drink. "So you think Harrison will be safe with your mom?" Lucas asked getting them both glasses. Max nodded. "Mom is usually fine. I also asked Karen and Ted to go hang out with her. They will go by in the morning." Max said pouring them both some of Hopper's bourbon.

Lucas took a sip of the drink, and remembered he hated Hopper's brand of alcohol. He looked to Max and saw her face amused. She grabbed his hand and he looked at her in surprise. "I don't want this to go unsaid." She said and kissed him. The action surprised Lucas and he spilled the glass. From across the house Hopper yelled "Hey, don't waste my booze!" As if his booze sense tingled. Jonathan saw the sight in the bar and headed over to where Nancy was helping Joyce set up traps.

"Hey, do you guys need any help?" Jonathan asked. Joyce nodded and motioned him over. "I am not very good with bear traps." She said. "Explain Hopper then." Nancy said with a smirk. "Hop didn't fall into a trap, I was overpowered by his animal nature." Joyce said. Jonathan let out a groan. Both women laughed at him.

Nancy was glad for the laugh, she knew danger was approaching but she needed some levity. She was still awkward around Jonathan. She never told her family about the issues and she suspected he never told Joyce. She was carving a massive spike in a piece of wood. She had a good idea for a booby trap.

"Well, I am going to see if I can put Max and Lucas on task." Joyce said as she handed Jonathan another bear trap. She winked at her son who blushed slightly.

"Did you tell her?" Nancy asked. Jonathan shook his head. "Maybe Will told her. I kind of told Will." He said. Nancy nodded. She understood he would tell his brother. "I hope you didn't say anything bad about me." Nancy said. He shook his head. "I just said the facts. I kind of got an earful from Will." Jonathan said. Nancy grimaced. Then she remembered the fight they had. "Jon, about the fight we had." She began. Jonathan grabbed her hand. "I'm sorry. I don't want to do any of this without telling you how sorry I am." Jonathan said. Nancy smiled at him. "Look, lets try and talk about this when we make it out." Nancy said. "If we make it...." Jonathan began but Nancy gripped his hand. "WHEN, we make it." She said staring hard into Jonathan's eyes. He nodded and the two continued to work.

From the doorway, Hopper and Joyce watched the pair. "I still should have killed him." Hopper said. Joyce rolled her eyes and swatted his arm.

Will and Chad were in the kitchen, prepping weapons that Hopper had in gun cases. "It's kind of exciting to be on one of those famous adventures you told me about." Chad said loading a magazine with bullets. Will smiled, he told Chad about their misadventures, hardly believing them until recently. "Well, usually its monsters from another dimension. Government troops and mercenaries seem kind of tame." Will said. Chad smiled. "Nothing out of the way about all this." Chad said. Will grinned and continued loading magazines.

### *Downtown Hawkins*

Mike hadn't been in town in a few years. Max preferred to bring Harrison down. The thought of his son made him ache a bit. He wanted to see him badly. He steadied himself. He took a few breaths and headed for the electronics store. It was the old Radioshack that he used to work in when he was in high school.

A teenager looked up from his magazine as Mike made his way to the speaker wire. "Can I help you sir?" He asked. Mike looked at him and just pointed to the speaker wire. "Just 40 feet of this." Mike said. The teen looked at him wide eyed as he realized he was serious.

Mike left the store with a massive spool of wire and met up with Steve. "Ok Chief, got the stuff we needed." He said. Steve nodded.

"We have company." Steve said. Mike looked in the side mirror of Steve's car and saw them. Two of Jericho's men in black coats. "Take this to Dustin." Mike said handing him the spool. Steve nodded. "Don't do anything stupid shithead." Steve said as he drove off. Mike watched him go. "No promises here." Mike said.

Mike took notice of Jericho's men, the ones who were obviously his men. The newcomers were soldiers sticking out like sore thumbs. Mike had a stupid idea. He found one near a cross walk. He stood at attention. Mike laughed as he walked past and shoved him into a car. Mike blended in with the crowd as people gathered around to check if he was okay. Two more men were standing by an alley. Mike went around the other end, and grabbed both by the back of their necks. He slammed one face first into a wall, and quickly threw the other one into a dumpster. The soldier tried to get out and was rewarded with a punch in the face.

Mike ran into a Waffle House, he figured he did enough damage. He sat down at one of the booths and ordered a coffee. He decided to wait for the commotion to end before he made his way to the rally point. He sat in his seat and felt the days aches overwhelm him for a moment. He was still wearing the clothes he wore yesterday, and most people had given him strange looks with the cuts and bruises he had. Mike didn't care. He would sit and recover later, if there was a later.

"Well, you certainly look like shit." A voice said as he sat down. Mike opened his eyes and Jericho was sitting across from him. Mike didn't make much of a move to fight, he was tired. Jericho seemed amused. "You did a good job taking down those soldiers. Granted they just left basic training maybe two weeks ago, but good job." Jericho said. Mike shrugged. "Honestly, I figured you guys would have hidden away for a bit." Mike said

Jericho shook his head. "No, had a weird feeling you wouldn't go after my men. Seeing as they can be an issue for you. I had a sniper watching from the rooftops." Jericho said pointing out the window. Mike looked outside and sure enough, there was a man on a roof that could see most of the downtown area of Hawkins. Mike sat back in his chair as Jericho looked over a menu. "What's good here?" He asked.

Mike shrugged his shoulders. "Honestly, I don't come to Hawkins that often. My parents are kind of annoying that I'm not married to the mother of my son. And this place has some bad memories." Mike said. Jericho shrugged. "Well, you need to eat something. We have a score to settle and I want you at your best." He said. Mike picked up the menu and looked it over as the waitress showed up.

The pair ordered, and received their pot of coffee. Jericho drank his black, Mike needed extra sugar. "Brenner has a file on you. Guy kind of got obsessed with you. It left me with few questions." Jericho said. Mike looked up at him. Jericho pulled out a photo he took from his apartment. It was one of Mike and Max, they were at a picnic and Will took a photo of them. "What happened with her?" Jericho asked. Mike shrugged. "Like how we broke up or how I started dating her?" Mike asked. "Yes" Jericho said simply. Mike laughed a little. "Kind of a long story." Mike said. "I got time." Jericho said.

### *Five years ago*

Mike's apartment was a mess. It had been a month since the failed rescue of El and it left Mike broken. Delivery boxes were everywhere, beer cans strewn about the place, and Mike couldn't remember his last shower. Mike just didn't care. Five years wasted on trying to save someone he loved. Did he love her? She had been gone longer than he knew her. He didn't know if his sorrow was the ten years wasted on searching for her or the fact she was gone forever. He had not spoken to his friends much. He just didn't have it in him to face them after essentially leading them to a dead end. He saw it in all there eyes when they disposed of Dane's body. Still kind of hot Max shot the guy.

Mike was going to look for another beer when a knock came at his door. "Oh fuck I am not in the mood for this." Mike growled to himself. He stumbled towards the door as it kept knocking. "I hear you, give me a damn minute." Mike said. He unlocked the door and opened it. On the other side of the door was Max. She was carrying a bag and looked like she had been crying. "Hey." She said. Mike let her in, suddenly embarrassed about the state of his apartment. "Sorry to barge in. Lucas and I had a bad fight. Dustin and Suzie aren't home and Will has his boyfriend over." Max explained. Mike merely nodded as she entered the living room.

"Did I catch you at a bad time?" She asked. Mike shook his head and stumbled to grab a trash bag. Max put her stuff down and helped Mike before he collapsed. She sniffed him. "Are you still drunk?" She asked. Mike didn't answer but merely looked to the floor. "You go take a shower, I'll see if I can scrounge up some coffee." She said, ordering him to his bathroom. Mike wanted to protest but something in her eye made him reconsider that approach.

Mike got into the hot shower and let the waters pour over him as the past few months seemed to fade away. Once he was done, he looked at himself in the mirror. He hadn't shaved since the incident, so he grabbed his trimmer and razor.

After he was done, Mike changed into some sweat pants and white shirt. When he arrived in the living room, most of the trash had been put in bags, with Max working diligently. "My apartment wasn't that bad." Mike grumbled to himself. As he watched Max work, he noticed new things about her. She was wearing her standard jeans and tshirt, but the jeans weren't the baggy ones she wore when she skated, something she loved doing still, they were tight, form fitting and a little low on her waist. Her tshirt was standard on her, but Mike was just mesmerized. He realized he was staring and he shook his head. He didn't want to get involved with her, especially with her and Lucas are just cooling off from a fight.

"Hey Mike, you know trash goes in the trash right?" Max said when she realized he was there. Mike merely shrugged. "Help me get this shit to the dumpster." Max said tossing him a bag. Mike smiled at her and grabbed a few more bags.

After they cleaned out the apartment, Mike found himself sobered up and didn't need coffee, but he hadn't had any food that wasn't takeout curry or pizza. Mike sighed as he looked through his pantry and fridge and couldn't find anything he could cook with. "Hey, don't sweat it, I already ordered some Chinese food." Max said. Mike grimaced. "I kinda wanted to cook for you. We can go grocery shopping tomorrow." Mike said.

The pair sat on the couch, eating their order and drinking the beer Mike had in his fridge. Mike probably had to admit he had a problem. "So, what was the fight you and Lucas had?" Mike asked.

Max took in a deep breath, remembering she was not here to hang out. “He saw me kiss you.” Max said. “He was questioning our relationship. I admitted I was attracted to you.” Max said. Mike was slightly dumbfounded. In the years since El was taken, Max had stood by his side. And the many times she would crash in his basement when Neil was being a pain in the ass were some interesting nights. He never questioned the kiss they shared but when she said she needed to get it out of her system, he wondered how much she cared. “It’s like, I saw how devoted you were to El, for ten fucking years you kept yourself ready for her. Like some knight in shining armor. I wanted someone that devoted. Lucas and me would break up over the god damn sofa pillows.” Max said, clearly drunk. Mike was not too far behind her in how many beers he had.

“Yea, but you two would get back together.” Mike said. She waved him off. “Yea, but you think he would resist Jennifer Hayes trying to give him a lap dance at that party?” Max asked. Mike blushed in embarrassment. He was so invested in his mission, when they went to a party their junior year, Jennifer Hayes pulled him into a bedroom and tried to seduce Mike. He left her in the bedroom once it became clear what she wanted. She had seen him fight several boys and she was enamored by him. It was slightly embarrassing for all parties involved.

“Yea, but I dunno anymore. El has been gone longer than I knew her. In many ways I think I just kept it up because she was perfect for me. But I dunno if I should have just moved on.” Mike said. Max shrugged and snuggled onto Mike. “Lucas is a good guy, but I don’t know if I really love him anymore. We fight all the time, we have very little in common. His sister scares the hell out of me.” She said. “Hey, Erica scares Hopper, so don’t feel bad about that.” Mike said wrapping his arm around her. Mike took a sip of his beer and Max took the bottle from him and took a sip as well.

“Look, you two bounce back, you always do.” Mike said. Max got closer to him. “What if I don’t want to?” She asked, barely a whisper. Her closeness was driving Mike crazy and he let himself stop caring for a moment. He pulled her close and kissed her. Max kissed him back, letting strong emotion run through them. Mike picked her up from the couch, and while still kissing her, carried her into his

bedroom.

Mike woke up the next morning, feeling like the most rest he had in months. He felt something was in bed with him and briefly wondered if the past ten years was a dream and he and El had been together the whole time. But he looked to the form laying next to him. The red hair was messy from the night before. She snored slightly as she slept, but a smile was plastered on her face. Mike smiled himself and kissed her forehead. Mike didn't know how things would work with Lucas and the others, but he would deal with it.

### *Present day*

"It was a lot of problems afterward. Lucas and I barely spoke during that time. Max doesn't know he and I had a fight on the roof of my apartment. We were together for four months before we broke up. As much as we enjoyed each others company, I just didn't love her like that. Things got a little complicated when she got pregnant. I thought about marrying her but she shot that down. Lucas and her made up after our son was born and I guess the two have been making it work. Me and Lucas are still on shaky ground. Luckily my boy is loved by everyone involved. Lucas cares for him like a cool uncle. So, yea, that's the story." Mike said. He and Jericho had finished their meals, the sun was reaching early evening.

"So, let me get this straight, you broke the bro code with your best friend and had a kid as a result, and now you all have some weird giant family going on?" Jericho said. Mike thought about it and nodded. "Harrison even calls Hopper 'Hop-Hop'." Mike said. Jericho snorted at that. "I guess we better go back to being enemies." Mike said. Jericho nodded. "If things were different, you would be my friend." Jericho said, paying for the meal. "But, you and I have a score to settle. Next time, I will not underestimate you. You would do will to do the same." Jericho said. Mike nodded. "No matter what happens. Can you at least leave my family out of this?" Mike asked. Jericho nodded, and made a note for later.

Jericho left the diner and recalled his men to the staging ground. "You sure we didn't make a mistake in not catching him there?" Lopez asked. Jericho nodded. "It wouldn't be appropriate." Jericho said. "Well, Saverio called, he said they are gathering at an old lab.

He will have his men meet us there.” Lopez said. Jericho thought about that. He looked at the files, knew Mike had a history with that place.

“He isn’t at the lab.” Jericho said simply. “Saverio said his friends were spotted there.” Lopez said. Jericho shook his head. “He is sending us out of the town. No, Wheeler is somewhere else. He wants us to face him at a different place.” Jericho said. “But where?” Smiley asked. Jericho thought about it, and he checked his pocket. A piece of paper was in it. Wheeler wanted him to meet him at the location. “We move in ten.” Jericho said. The group began moving and prepping for the mission. Jericho then pulled Nicholai aside. “I have a special mission for you.” Jericho said. Nicholai nodded when he was told the details.

### *Steel mill*

Mike made his way over to the steel mill, the distraction of Jericho not burning the town looking for him was good so Dustin and Will could get things set up there. As he arrived, the small group was gathered. “I don’t want you guys to get hurt for me. But I thank you for standing by my rather stupid plan. Thanks for all being by my side guys.” Mike said. The group nodded and many of them got in cars and trucks. Only two stayed, Lucas and Nancy. “I am not leaving you alone.” Nancy said hugging her brother. “You are one of my first friends. I know shit got rocky with us, but I will stand by you.” Lucas said. They shook hands, then went into a hug. “OK, Jericho will probably figure out I am here. I kind of told him I was here.” Mike said. “You think he will take the bait?” Lucas asked. Mike nodded. “He has a score to settle with me. And Hopper should be able to take out those soldiers that were brought here by the department of energy. Once this is done, we are going on the offensive.” Mike said. “And the special project we just rigged up?” Nancy asked. “I think we can also save El.” Mike said.

### *Command vehicle*

Jericho was sitting in the front passenger seat when the driver stopped, up ahead in the road was Saverio and Dr. Strauss. Jericho laughed at the sight. “You didn’t think I was letting you go alone did you?” Saverio asked. “I was hoping you would lead the attack at the

lab. Wheelers friends are there.” Jericho said. “Yea, but I need to supervise Wheeler’s death. Dr. Strauss assures me the machine is ready, it just needs to be transported here.” Saverio said. The doctor looked to Jericho and nodded. He looked sad at the events.

“Okay, you can tag along, on one condition. You stay out of my way.” Jericho said. Saverio gave him a fake smile and nodded. The pair entered the command vehicle and they drove off.

### *Steel Mill*

Mike looked and saw a massive trailer was headed for the mill. “Their here.” Mike said on the radio. He prepared himself for the fight of his life.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

So, the things that slowed me down was, last week i had to cover a lot of shifts at work, we had a walkout and scrambled for coverage. Then. Haunting of Bly Manor came out and i needed to watch it. It was good. I make no promises but I want to finish this story by the end of the year. Tell me what you all think.

## 10. chapter 9

### Notes for the Chapter:

I am on a roll today. Also i wanted to get this out now because i am going to be buried in work.

### Chapter 9

Hopper saw the trucks coming over the distance. He checked over his equipment and he pulled up his radio. "All right boys and girls, we got company." Hopper growled into the receiver. Several affirmatives went through and Hopper left the roof to get in his position. While Mike planned for separating The Department of Energy's soldiers, Hopper had a plan for actually dealing with them, and the Lab was a big place.

The Hawkins Lab went into disrepair over the years and when it came up for sale, Hopper bought it. He intended to burn it down but Joyce convinced him to keep it. She had a feeling Eleven would return. Thinking about her was painful. And this insanity that Brenner was using her as some kind of puppet, it was too much for him. He loaded his shotgun as he made his way to the elevator, the only working thing in the damn building, and found his way to the lobby where Will and his boyfriend were setting trip wires. He nodded to them as he found his way down to the lobby of the building.

Joyce went to the cabin, she had lots of first aid stuff there and was going to set up for a medical wing. Hopper loved over and saw Robin setting up a crossbow trap. She caught his eye and moved to him.

"Hey Jim, I know it's a bad time to talk about this but the park near Otsel street is in disrepair and I kinda need you to authorize funds for that." She said. Hopper rolled his eyes, what a fucking time to talk city management. Robin was the deputy director of the parks department and usually kept to herself, unless she wanted to annoy him, which was frequent.

"Look Robin, I think we have other concerns right now." Hopper

said. Robin gave him a quizzical look. "Why, we aren't doing anything important." She said. Hopper rolled his eyes as she moved back to setting up her crossbow trap. Hopper shook his head as he watched the soldiers prepare themselves to get kitted out.

"So why couldn't Erica come?" Steve asked as he came next to Hopper. He had his own rifle, as well as that baseball bat. "I think Lucas told us she was out of country. Otherwise I think she would take care of all this with that sass of hers." Hopper said. Steve thought about that then nodded. "Is this a bad time to remind you that I need to hire a couple of detectives?" Steve asked. Hopper turned and glared at him. Steve smile at him then scampered away. "I wonder if I can kill both of them and blame it on the soldiers out there?" Hopper asked himself as he viewed one soldier falling over putting his pack on.

Hopper rolled his eyes and then moved away to go help Dustin with a few bear traps. He found him struggling with one. "Here, let me help." Hopper said as he helped open the rusted item. "Where's Suzie?" Hopper asked. "She found a place to lay come caltrops. And I think she is putting some claymore mines in a few walls." Dustin said. Hopper looked outside, the soldiers there probably would fall for it. "Ok, lets move upstairs. The traps here should thin them out." Hopper said. Dustin nodded and left to gather the others.

Heading to the stairs, Hopper sets up one more trap. "These guys won't know what hit them." Hopper said.

### *Jericho residence*

Emily was finishing the dishes when Sam entered the kitchen. "Sorry bud, the pie is still baking." She said. Sam merely nodded. "Men are coming." He said. Emily looked at him and saw the picture in his hand. There were black vans parked on the county road. Emily smiled to herself. "Sam, get in the tunnels. I'll set up the welcome committee." She said. Sam nodded and pushed the kitchen table out of the way and found the latch to a hidden door. Emily shut all the lights off in the house, and put the pie she was baking on low heat so it won't burn.

She picked up a scope and looked out. Out in the dark, several men

were approaching the property. The house was out in the country, and the nearest neighbor was eight miles away. Switching her scope to night vision, she saw they were coming down the hill to her yard in a spread pattern. She loaded the scope onto her rifle and grabbed a detonator.

Emily headed for the roof and watched as the group of soldiers spread further out. Emily looked and saw one stopping on one of the traps. She then took aim at another soldier. Pushing the button on the detonator, an explosion took out a soldier in a clout of red mist. As the blast shook, Emily fired her rifle and took out another. The soldiers looked around in confusion. One ran into a mine that was planted in the ground and exploded. Another got his foot stuck in a trap, then Emily shot him in the head.

Three more soldiers started to back off. Emily hit one in the head. The other two got back to back, trying to walk back to their truck. Emily smiled as she set off another explosive that took both idiots out. “Did they really think this would work?” She said to herself. She heard another van drive down another path to the house. She saw there they were coming from and laughed. That road was not driven on, because her brother mined it. And sure enough, the van exploded as it came over one of the mines. “I wonder if Sam saw this stuff?” Emily asked herself as she headed off the roof.

“Sam, you can come out.” Emily said. When he didn’t come out, she grabbed a shotgun and headed down to the tunnel. She didn’t head far as she saw him sitting down drawing, in a trance. She walked to him and saw what he was drawing. “I need to get a hold of Charles.” She said.

### *Steel Mill Command Trailer*

Jericho and his men got suited up in their tactical gear. Saverio told them not to bring guns, because they might kill Wheeler, and that was not the plan. Jericho rolled his eyes but complied. “Not coming boss?” Smiley asked. Jericho shook his head. “You guys go first. I’ll monitor from here.” He said. Smiley nodded and assembled with the others. It was a seven man job. The rest of the crew were in a hotel in Hawkins, mostly support staff. Nicholai though, was on a separate mission.

Jericho went to the main screen where he could monitor his men's communications. Dr. Straus sat next to him while Saverio was issuing orders at the lab. "Go in carefully." Saverio said. Jericho looked over at him and rolled his eyes. "Ya know, you could have just directed them there." Jericho said. Saverio grunted. "Boss man wants me here. When your men get Wheeler, we can end the day." He said. Jericho snorted and put his headphones on. "Okay guys, nice and easy. Don't take any chances." Jericho said.

### *Inside*

"Roger that boss. Over and out." Lopez said. He directed the six men to spread out. To his left was Smiley, and to Lopez right, was Ford. Lopez wished he had Nicholai there, but Jericho always had a plan. The other men were just as capable guys, all trained in various armies all over the world. Lopez himself was a former Ranger out of Fort Bragg. He knew Smiley was an MIT engineer and Ford was Marine Recon. They were ready for this.

A loud pop alerted them to a man down. Lopez and the others convened on the noise and found one of their men, Archer, down. He was still breathing. Smiley looked him over and found something on his head. He pulled it off and it gave him a slight shock. "It shocked him. He tripped that flash bang, and someone hit him with this." He said. Lopez looked around and directed everyone to stay low with hand signals.

Lucas looked down from his perch. Dustin and he had developed them as a joke, but the first time Max got them with it, he knew he had a new toy that would be useful. He called them sticky shockers. He saw Nancy was shaking her head, she never liked using gadgets. Mike though, had some fun ideas. He was in a lower level, preparing a trap door.

Ford began walking up some stairs, heading up a cat walk. He heard a noise behind him. He turned and saw a small toy making a noise. "Weird." Ford said to himself. Suddenly, he found himself with a cord wrapped around his leg and he was pulled off the cat walk and was hanging upside down.

Nancy laughed at the snare she used. She kept a lookout for more

ways to take the remainder of them out.

Smiley saw Ford get caught in a snare. He wasn't going to get attacked so easily. He could see a few snares all over the place. He passed by a place where they molten steel would have been loaded. He looked over at it, he then found his feet pulled from under him. He was dragged under the floor and found himself with Wheeler staring at him. Smiley raised his hands in surrender, before Wheeler kicked him hard in the face.

Lopez and the other two men formed a slight semi circle and looked around. For the first time, he wished he didn't listen to Jericho and just brought a gun. Soon, they were over a grate, and it opened up, dropping the three to the ground. Lopez and the others got up as Wheeler stepped into the light.

"You ain't beating me again." Lopez snarled. Wheeler smiled and dropped two smoke grenades. The smoke blinded them and chocked them. Lopez tried to reach Wheeler, but he found himself knocked out by a sharp electrical surge through his head. The other two were quickly knocked out by Mike and Nancy.

"So, what do we do with them?" Nancy asked. Mike smiled. "I have an idea."

### *Hawkins Lab*

Dustin heard many explosions out from the floor below. Hopper had told them they estimated at least twenty soldiers. Dustin gripped his nail bat, one that he made exactly three hours after El was taken. He had some frustrations to get out of his system.

Four men came up, and saw a raging man rush them with a nail bat. Before they could get their weapons up, One of them was hit in the head with the bat and it stuck in his skull. Dustin tried to pry the bat out but it wasn't budging. The other three got their bearings and almost fired, but all three were taken down by a small hail of bullets. Dustin looked over and saw Steve walk up, holding his rifle in one hand and his bat over his shoulder. "Ya gotta be more careful little bro, sometimes the nails stick." Steve said. Dustin nodded as he pulled the bat free.

Hopper headed downstairs and found several of them huddled together. He smiled as he listened to them. “Nobody fucking said anything about booby traps!” One exclaimed as he was helping a friend out of a bear trap. Hopper grabbed a grenade from his vest, pulled the pin, and tossed it. The others saw it and scattered, leaving the guy stuck in the bear trap to get caught in the blast.

The soldiers scattered, to consumed by fear to make rational thought, one ran down a hallway and tripped a claymore mine in the wall. The explosion took him out and collapsed the ceiling. The others scrambled away and found themselves on the other end of two people with guns, both women. One was wearing glasses and wielding a shotgun, the other was a redhead with an AK assault rifle. The soldiers fell before they could clear their weapons.

“That was kinda anticlimactic.” Robin said as they made their way together. “Well, it looks like a lot of them grouped together.” Max said, seeing two soldiers dead from one arrow. “We need to get to the steel mill. Mike and the others might need us.” Will said. The group nodded and headed for their vehicles.

### *Steel Mill*

Jericho was not picking up anymore chatter, but he heard his men get taken out. He started to fume. He warned them to be careful. Jericho got up from the desk and headed out of the trailer. He looked around and heard a sound. Looking at a chute, he saw his men fall out of it, all of them either knocked out or tied up. Jericho ran up to them and helped Ford out of his ropes. “What the hell happened?” Jericho asked. “Fucking bastard had a few more tricks we weren’t ready for.” Ford said. Jericho nodded. “Get the men to the trailer. I’ll handle this.” Jericho said.

Jericho entered the mill, slamming the doors close and sealing it with a chain. He wanted no interruptions. He found a barrel by a staircase and took off his shirt. He then placed it on the barrel. He pulled out a bandana from his back pocket and tied it around his forehead.

“WHEELER!” Jericho shouted. “COME OUT AND FACE ME!”

Mike looked down from the catwalk. Nancy next to him. “We can

take him out now." She said motioning for Lucas to fire a sticky shocker. Mike motioned for him to stop. "No, he's mine." He said. Nancy wanted to strangle him. "Why? You don't need to do any macho shit right now." She demanded. Mike smiled at her. "It would be rude. Besides, it's a respect thing." Mike said, descending from the catwalk. He made his way down further to a lower catwalk that led to the stairs down to the entrance. Jericho was waiting for him.

He walked down and faced him down. Jericho was shirtless, showing off his muscles and tattoos. He had a few army tattoos that he didn't recognize, on top of a couple of flaming swords crossed on his stomach. The two walked up and faced each other. Jericho smiled. "You and I have a score to settle." He said. Mike nodded. "Yea, lets end this." He said.

Jericho stuck first, punching Mike in the face and knocked him back. He then grabbed his shirt and pulled him forward and delivered a massive head butt. Mike fell back in a slight daze as Jericho began delivering body blows into Mike's stomach. Jericho prepared an overhand punch, but Mike blocked it with his forearm. He looked up and glared at Jericho and upper cut his jaw. The blow sent him back, giving Mike an advantage. He tackled him back and punched him a few times in his kidney.

Mike pressed his advantage and went for another uppercut, but Jericho dropped his elbow onto Mike's fist.

Outside, Lopez came into the command trailer, seeing Saverio using their equipment to communicate with his men. Or at least trying to. "Fuck!" He yelled throwing the headphones down. "Tech support?" Lopez joked. Saverio glared at him. "I can't raise my men at the Lab." He said. Lopez snorted. "Wow, those are some untrained doofuses." He said. Saverio growled at him. "I spent months training them. The VR was perfect." Jericho said. Lopez shook his head. "Take it from me, never underestimate people who know the terrain. Or have shit nobody heard of" He said. Saverio shook his head, he had a platoon of men coming to his location. They were Brenner's men, ones he borrowed from delta force.

Inside, Mike was put back on the defense as he tried to block Jericho's blows. They were walking up the stairs while also trading

punches. Mike grabbed the hand rails and jumped a kick into Jericho's face, knocking him back slightly. Jericho recovered and punched Mike in the chin, knocking him down on the catwalk. He punched down to Mike's face but he dodged and hit the catwalk instead. If it hurt Jericho, he didn't show it. Mike got up, grabbed Jericho's neck and tossed him forward. He then rushed at him and tackled him to the ground. Mike began punching him several times in the face. Jericho kicked him off him and grabbed him by the shirt. He held him on the guard rail and started squeezing Mike's throat.

Mike felt air leaving him, he needed to think fast. He looked and saw several chains. He grabbed one and wrapped it around Jericho's neck. He wrapped it a couple of times and pulled on it, cutting off his air flow. Jericho pulled on the chain and released it from the top of the roof. The weight though pulled him forward and had him on the guard rail. Mike took advantage and punched him in the stomach, having him gasp for air. Mike then grabbed Jericho's feet and tossed him over the railing.

Outside, sitting in a tree, Weatherford was perched up when he saw several trucks coming. He looked them over with his rifle, they were army trucks. "Lopez, we got company." He said into his radio.

Lopez came out and saw the trucks arriving. Their were a lot of troops. He ran back in to confront Saverio. "What the shit is going on?" He demanded. "I'm handling this my way. I need to secure the scene. Doc Straus assures me its now ready." He said. Lopez was furious. "No, fuck you asshole. This ain't your op." He said going for the radio. Saverio grabbed his shirt and pulled him back, then slammed him onto a table. "I don't think so." He said putting a gun to Lopez head.

The rest of Bravo company was then secured by the soldiers, these men were in all black tactical gear, all their insignias were gone. For recognized them as Delta Force. "Well, this sucks." Ford said.

A figure in black also rode with them. Ford recognized it as that cyborg with the girl's face, but the madman's voice. Saverio came out and greeted it. "Wheeler is inside. It looks like Jericho is fighting him. And there might be two more people." Saverio said. The figure nodded. "Get the men ready. Leave Wheeler alone. The others are

expendable.” Brenner’s voice said. “And the others?” Saverio asked. “Dispose of them.” He said.

Jericho got up, catching his breath. Wheeler was a good dirty fighter when he needed to be. He grabbed the chain and wrapped it around his fist. He felt pain in the back of his knee as he fell over, Wheeler attacking him with a pipe. He then hit Jericho’s back. He fell over, rolled out of the way of Wheeler hitting him with the way of another swipe. He unrolled the chain on his fist and swung at him. He swung left, then right, Wheeler dodging both.

Mike pushed forward and did an upper swing, Jericho caught it with his chain, wrapped the pipe, wrestled the pipe out of Wheeler’s hands then threw both the chain and the pipe away. Jericho shoulder charged him and pushed Mike back, hitting him back to the front area. Mike kicked Jericho in the face, knocking him down.

Mike was about to prepare to finish his foe, when the doors blew open and several soldiers in tactical gear stormed in.

Lopez sat inside, handcuffed to a chair as Saverio entered. “You get to go last.” He said. Lopez glared at him. “I told them you will dig your men’s graves here. Then you join them.” Lopez didn’t dignify that with an answer.

Outside, Bravo Company was being rounded up. Only Weatherford was missing, hiding in a tree line. He didn’t know how he was going to save his friends. If he fired, they would find him and kill him. He could only watch.

Mike saw the men surround them, he wasn’t expecting this. “I guess you guys are with the public works department?” Mike joked. Jericho groaned. “Bad jokes are my thing Wheeler.” He said getting up. Mike shrugged as he held his hands up.

Hopper left the cars and his group made their way through the woods to the mill. He knew their were tough guys there. They stopped a miles up the road. He sent Suzie and Will to scout ahead. They did not come back alone. Standing with them in a ghillie suit and a sniper rifle, was a Bravo Company man.

"The hell are you?" Steve asked. "Name's Weatherford. Look, Delta guys are there. They are going to execute my team. I know you don't trust me, but I need your help." He said. Hopper glared at him. "He telling the truth?" Hopper asked Suzie. "Yea, whole platoon of guys, and the Bravo guys are about to be executed. I know their kind of dicks, but Mike respects them." Suzie said. Hopper pinched the bridge of his nose. "Fine. What do we do?" Hopper asked.

Dr. Straus looked on from the command trailer. He didn't have much of a plan, just hoped Wheeler didn't mess up stopping Brenner. He looked to the handcuffed man. "You must think me a monster." He said. Lopez looked at him and shrugged. "Pretty monstrous what you did to that kid." Lopez said. "Brenner took my family. He said he would send me to them when his plans finish." Straus said. "I already know he killed them. Saverio has a sadistic streak. He got drunk and showed me where they stored my families bodies." Straus said.

"That's fucked up." Lopez said. Straus nodded. "If I gave you a chance, could you hold them off?" Straus asked. Lopez nodded. "Wait for the right moment." Straus said, putting a handcuff key in his hand.

Hopper looked on from the tree line. He had an idea but he needed a distraction.

Mike looked up and saw Nancy with her rifle. She fired a shot into one of the men. He fell quickly. Mike and Jericho then surprised them and jumped two of them. Two fired at Jericho, who used one of the soldiers as a shield. He took his rifle and gunned down the pair, and threw the dead soldier down. Mike grabbed the rifle from one guy and threw him to a few of his friends. Mike tossed a grenade pin at them as the man exploded and took his friends with him.

"Not bad Wheeler." Jericho said firing at the retreating soldiers. Mike grinned as they took magazines off the soldiers.

The commotion inside brought the rest of the soldiers attention away from Bravo Company. As they rushed past, The main trailer opened and Lopez stepped out, wielding an AA-12 assault shotgun. He began firing at the soldiers, catching them off guard. Several returned fire and Lopez went back inside, thankful the trailer was armor plated.

Hopper took the sign and charged an attack. Himself and Steve came out of the trees and fired at the soldiers, while Robin and Max moved the Bravo Company guys out of the line of fire. Weatherford provided sniper support.

Brenner growled with rage. "Fix this Saverio, I will finish off Mr. Wheeler." He said as he headed inside the mill. Saverio nodded and headed to the command trailer where Lopez was still firing at the soldiers. He entered through the drivers side door and got the jump on him. "Get your men to stop and I'll make it quick." Saverio said. Lopez smiled. "You got your own problems." He said. Saverio smugly laughed. "Yea, like what?" He asked. He was answered by Straus hitting his side with a cattle prod and knocking him out. "I never liked him." Straus said.

Brenner entered the mill, searching for Wheeler. "When I crush his skull my dear Eleven, you will be mine." He muttered to himself.

Mike saw it, and realized he needed to get his plan in motion. "Nancy, Lucas, Jericho, you guys head outside and help the others." Mike said. Jericho looked at him. "I don't think you remember very well but that think kicked your ass last time." Jericho said. Mike nodded. "I have a plan." Mike said. "Yea, that's kind of all we got out of him." Lucas said. "Hey, I explained some of my plan." Mike said. Nancy looked at him. "No, you told us to get stuff, not what you were actually going to do." She said. "Yea, you kind of need to explain shit." Jericho said. Mike shook his head. "No time, I need to get it to the back of the mill." Mike said. Jericho nodded and motioned for the others to follow him out.

Brenner walked carefully through the mill, the injections into the body he was occupying could wear off. It put its mind in a kind of trance. It saw everything Brenner was doing. He was counting on that, to break the will of Subject Eleven. I always fought him, always trying to assert it was a person. When this was over, it will bend to him.

He saw Wheeler down a hallway. Brenner felt Eleven stirring. He rushed forward as Wheeler ran off. "You won't hide from me Mr. Wheeler." Brenner said.

Jericho and the others got out on the roof and saw the battle. Hopper was fighting side by side with Lopez, holding off more soldiers as they arrived. Steve, Dustin and Smiley were exchanging weapons while firing. Steve would swing his bat at a soldier, toss it to Smiley who would also hit another soldier, then to Dustin. Suzie was providing fire support for Weatherford. Everyone else was fighting together against the Delta platoon. “Let’s join in.” Lucas said as he slid off the roof. Jericho shrugged his shoulders and joined Nancy in coming down.

As the pair slid down, they fired their weapons at the Delta soldiers, frustrating them more as they are attacked on all sides.

Brenner kept walking, he could feel Wheeler around. Looking around, he noticed the mill decorated with lights. It was a curious thing. He soon found a hallway decorated with blankets. He remembered years ago, Wheeler had a blanket fort for Eleven. What was the boy playing at? Brenner walked inside and found it was haphazardly decorated like Wheeler’s basement. “What is going on Wheeler?” Brenner demanded.

Mike stepped into the room from another door. “I’m here El.” Mike said. Brenner looked over at him and laughed. “I have control over its body Wheeler. You cannot stop me.” Brenner said and launched an attack on Mike. He could barely defend himself as Brenner slammed him to the ground. Mike rolled away to avoid the boot slam on his face.

“C’mon El, you need to stop him. I know your in there!” Mike yelled. Brenner growled and used the power to fling Mike back. “Stop trying. It is mine, body and soul.” Brenner said walking. He found himself struggling to move. Eleven was taking control. He needed to finish this. “You will die.” Brenner said and used the power to raise Mike up and fling him to a wall.

“I have such amazing plans Mr. Wheeler. You should not have turned It against me.” Brenner said. He opened the visor and Mike saw Eleven’s eyes for the first time in fifteen years. They were terrified, as Brenner was forcing her to watch. Mike struggled to reach the remote in his back pocket.

Brenner noticed and used the power to pull it out. “What is this? A weapon?” Brenner asked. “Push the button and find out asshole.” Mike said. Brenner laughed and pushed the button. A strange chord began playing, and it was all over the room.

Outside, the Delta force was mopped up, and the music began playing. “Is that the Police?” Jericho asked.

Every breath you take  
Every move you make  
Every bond you break  
Every step you take  
I'll be watching you

Brenner felt Eleven waking up, taking back control. “Saverio, activate the kill switch.” Brenner commanded into the earpiece. Mike was let go by the power and fell to the ground.

“You remember this song El? Its from the Snowball. We danced to this.” Mike said. Brenner began thrashing, trying to wrest control from Eleven. “I never gave up on you. I always loved you El, I never want to lose you again, so if you feel the same, fight that son of a bitch and come back to me.” Mike yelled.

“NO ITS MINE!” Brenner was yelling, but then a new voice joined. “NO, YOU WILL STOP!” A soft but fierce voice yelled. Brenner closed the visor, hoping the outside stimulus would stop the internal battle, but he was too late. “NO, NO, I WILL NOT BE STOPPED!” Brenner yelled.

“Please, El, you got this. Kick his ass.” Mike said. With a massive scream the body levitated and soon, the helmet broke in two off of her head. She floated down and looked at Mike.

He looked worse for wear, having bruises and cuts all over his body. And he was wearing the same damn clothes he was wearing when she attacked him at his apartment.

Mike looked at El and smiled. She was indeed older, her hair was shaven off, but Mike still had one thing to say to her. “Pretty.” Mike said. El blushed as she heard the words. “Your not mad?” El asked.

Mike shook his head, “I am surprised you’re not mad I couldn’t come for you.” Mike said. “I can never be mad at you.” She said and the pair ran to each other in an embrace. Both fell to the ground and cried into each other, happy to be reunited.

Their reunion was short lived. They heard Brenner through the destroyed helmet. “This isn’t over Mr. Wheeler.” He said. El shivered at hearing it. “He’s right. He won’t stop.” El said. Mike shook his head. “Then we stop him.” Mike said.

El smiled, she missed his enthusiasm. But soon, emotions began flooding her. Fifteen years of torture by Brenner and that thug Saverio. She started hyperventilating. “El, cmon, its okay.” Mike said, backing off. El needed space and air. She decided she needed to get away, and she blasted the roof with her powers, then displayed a new one, and flew away.

“What the hell was that?” Jericho said behind Mike. “She just left.” Mike said. Jericho nodded. Lopez came in behind Jericho. “Boss, Emily is calling you.” He said. Jericho nodded and headed out to the command trailer with Lopez and Mike following. It was tense outside, as both groups at one point were enemies. As he entered, he saw Saverio on the ground hogtied and gagged. Jericho stepped on him as he made his way to the phone.

“Em, whats wrong?” Jericho asked. “Thank god I got a hold of you. Soldiers came to the house.” Emily said. Jericho looked down at Saverio and almost crushed his head. “Are ya’ll ok?” He asked. “We’re fine, the traps worked. But listen, Sam was in the tunnels drawing. It’s about Nicholai.” Emily said. Jericho felt his blood go cold.

*Hargrove residence.*

Susan heard a noise from the kitchen. It sounded like it came from Harrison’s room. The older woman walked towards the stairs, needing to make sure her grandbaby hadn’t gotten out of his crib. As she reached the stairs, the lights in the house went out. “What is going on?” Susan wondered out loud. A hand grabbed her mouth and she was pulled aside as a knife came to the throat. “Keep quiet bitch.” The harsh voice said. “You fucking stay out of the way, and I

won't give you another mouth." He said. Susan struggled, elbowing him in the stomach and moving away.

"Bad move bitch." The man in black said. He slashed at her but she moved away, hoping to get to her gun in the living room. The man was fast though. She ran into the living room and he chased her around the coffee table. "You should have cooperated." He said. "Fuck you." Susan said. As the man lunged at her, an arm grabbed the other man, and several quick stabs to his kidneys and across his throat, the man fell over, dead.

"Are you okay lady?" A russian voice asked. Susan was in near hysterics. "Hey calm down, I'm here to help." He said. Susan then began getting her bearings. "Who are you?" She asked. "My name is Nicholai. My boss asked me to look in on you and your grandson." He said. She was confused, why would anyone need to look in on her or Harrison?

"My grandson, he's upstairs!" Susan exclaimed. Nicholai nodded. "It's okay, we'll get him and take you to safe place okay?" He said. Susan nodded and followed as Nicholai pulled out a pistol with a silencer on it. They started going up the stairs when a shot came at him. It missed and Nicholai shot back as the attacker moved back.

"Stay down here, I go make clear." He said as he rushed up. The soldier was not prepared as Nicholai grabbed the man's gun arm, lifted it above and fired his own weapon into the other man, killing him. "Stay down there. I go get boy." Nicholai said. Susan agreed. Nicholai entered the room and saw a young boy in a toddler bed. He looked sound asleep, then Nicholai noticed a syringe. The boy was knocked out. As Nicholai went to grab the child, the closet door opened, and a man with a shotgun fired. Nicholai couldn't react, and he fell into a dresser, bleeding from his wound. The man with the shotgun grabbed the child and left out the window before Susan came running in.

She entered the room and found Nicholai against a dresser, and her grandson was missing. "Oh god, can I do anything to help you?" She asked. Nicholai nodded. "Find....Jericho.....he.....can....help." He said as he died. Susan cried over the nice man.

The man ran to his van while carrying the sleeping toddler, the door opened up with three more men inside. “Let’s get the fuck out of here.” He said handing the toddler to another soldier. They drove off, and the leader pulled out a phone. “Dr. Brenner, we have the asset.” He said. “Excellent, bring it to me.” He said.

Somewhere, Brenner was laughing.

**Notes for the Chapter:**

I love cliffhangers don't you?

## 11. chapter 10

### Notes for the Chapter:

The end of act 2. I will still keep working on this. Originally i was going to go on break but I still wanna finish this before the end of the year. Might take a couple of weeks off though.

### Chapter 10

El landed a few feet from the cabin. She needed a familiar place and needed home. She was glad to see it still standing. It looked like it had been improved on. The last time she was here, Brenner had her friends and was going to kill them to get to her. She shook the memory and tried for a happy one. It was difficult after fifteen years.

She walked slowly to the cabin door, wondering what she would expect. The car in the parking spot was not familiar to her. It was a newer model black car. She touched it and the aura Joyce gave off was around the car. El, walked up to the porch and saw the familiar porch swing, it had newer chains on it and it looked like some of the wood had been replaced. She sat down and a memory came to her.

#### *16 years ago*

Hopper was waiting for her at the swing. It was early November and he had the day off. Hopper needed to talk to El about a development.

She came on the back of Mike's bike. At one point, Hopper would have been annoyed at seeing Mike, but the pair had a talk. Boundaries and limits had been set. He still caught them making out all the damn time, but at least Mike respected him.

El was getting one last goodbye kiss from Mike when she noticed Hopper. "Dad, hey." She waved. Hopper smiled and waved back. "All right, I'll see you at school." Mike said. El nodded and kissed him again. Mike rode off afterwards, waving to Hopper as he rode off.

She walked up to the porch swing and sat next to Hopper, giving him

a large hug. "Have a good day?" Hopper asked. El nodded. "I like school." She said.

Hopper had gotten her enrolled in the high school, with help from Owens, and she seemed to flourish. She had decent grades. It wasn't all sunshine and rainbows though, two weeks ago Hopper got pulled into the office because some boy didn't like her dating nerdy Mike Wheeler and tried to force the issue. On top of El's psychic abilities, Hopper did teach her self defense. Principal Moran tried to use 'boys will be boys' and Hopper chewed him out while threatening to charge the boy with harassment.

"Well, I had a productive day." Hopper said. El looked at him quizzically, usually Hopper would lay down all day. Hopper smiled at her. "How do you get along with Will?" Hopper asked.

El shrugged. "He is nice. We had a few pains at first but we worked it out." El said. Hopper nodded, glad to hear it. "You get along with Joyce?" Hopper asked. El wondered what the questions were for. "Yea, its nice to have someone to go to about things you get uncomfortable with." She said. Hopper shrugged his shoulders. "What's going on dad?" El asked. Hopper gave her a small smile. He pulled out a small box from his pocket.

"I am planning on asking Joyce to marry me." Hopper said simply. El had a confused look. "Marry?" She asked. Hopper chuckled. "Yes, it's a thing adults do. When they love each other very much, they typically get married and try to stay together forever." Hopper explained. El was still confused. "So, you will live together?" El asked. Hopper nodded. "Our families will live together. Will and Jonathan will be your brothers. Well, step brothers but we can get into that later." Hopper said.

El was feeling happy. She always wanted family. "So, Joyce would be my mom?" El asked. Hopper nodded. "She won't replace Terry, but yes she would be your mom." Hopper said. El nodded. She would try out calling Joyce mom next time she came over. "Well, lets get dinner started. Hopefully we can make those enchiladas from scratch." Hopper said.

*Present day*

They ended up having to order pizza because they were terrible at cooking. El smiled at the memory. It was the beginning of a good life. Then it was taken from them. El stood up and went for the door. With a flick of her head, the door unlocked.

El stepped inside, her eyes used to the dark saw that the old furniture was gone. Instead of a couch, it was two large comfy recliners. There was also a small couch on the side, but this place was more for Hopper and Joyce. El smiled a little thinking of the pair relaxing here.

On the wall, El found several pictures hanging. She was curious and looked them over. One was a picture of Hopper and El before she went to the Snow Ball. Dr. Owens helped take the picture. He called them a happy family. El missed Dr. Owens, he was nice.

Another picture was Hopper and Joyce at their wedding. She didn't wear white but her red dress was beautiful and Hopper looked rather dashing in his tuxedo. Another photo was Hopper in a suit, his beard was shaved as he stood in front of city hall. Will was holding a book that Hopper had his hand on. El wondered what that was about.

The last picture, was a family picnic. Will was standing with another man, the pair looked happy together. Nancy and Jonathan were also there. Dustin was in a corner with a brunette with glasses. Lucas was standing next to Joyce while Hopper was carving ribs. The pair that shocked El was Mike standing with Max. Max had a small child in her arms while Mike was standing by them. She realized what had happened.

More emotions came over her. Mike had a family. He had a child. She vaguely remembered Brenner talking about a child in connection with Mike. She would have asked, but Saverio liked to use the shock collar if she ever spoke. Emotions came over her and she rushed into her bedroom.

She ran inside and found the room was largely unchanged. The most she saw that was different was the bed looked to be updated. El laid down in the soft bed and realized she hadn't been in a real bed in years. It would either be a cot or the cold floor of her cell. She laid her head on a pillow and let her emotions flood her.

Fifteen years of pain and suffering. Never getting a break. Referred to as an it rather than as a person. El was now barely holding it together when a noise alerted her. She sat up from the bed when an older woman entered. She had grey hair, wearing slacks and a tshirt. Her glasses fitted the frame of her face. The woman was holding a pistol as she entered the room. Her determined face found El and the pair locked eyes.

The older woman dropped the gun upon seeing El. Her face softened as she looked upon her. "Eleven?" She asked. Barely above a whisper. El nodded at the woman, barely recognizing her. The woman entered the room and flipped a light switch, letting her features shine through. "Mom?" El asked. Joyce nodded as a smile formed on her face. "MOM!" El practically shouted as she ran to Joyce's outstretched arms.

### *Steel Mill*

Jericho put the receiver down, his face in a state of shock. When Emily said Nicholai was dead, he felt numb. He had been through a lot with the Russian. He looked over and saw Wheeler looking at him with concern.

"Everything ok?" He asked. Jericho shook his head. "Go get the red head. She needs to hear this as well." Jericho said. Mike nodded and called Max over. When she arrived, Jericho took a deep breath.

"I sent one of my men to your mothers house." Jericho said. "After I met Wheeler at that diner, and also from the way Saverio liked to talk, I figured I would send one of my best men to watch out for your son. I need you to contact your mom and see if everything is ok." He explained.

Max was furious. "Why do you want me to call my house?" She demanded. "Because I was given uneasy news. Troops attacked my house, they were looking for my little brother. He can see things before they happen. He told me my friend died." Jericho said. Max face softened a bit as she grabbed the phone.

She dialed the number and found the call didn't go through. "I can't get a hold of her." Max said. Jericho nodded while looking grim.

Mike was starting to rock himself back and forth. He was worried about his son. Max grabbed his hand, sharing his worry.

“Um...Excuse me?” A voice came through one of the radios. Max and Mike both looked at each other. Jericho grabbed the receiver. “This is a private radio line, identify yourself.” Jericho said. The voice took a breath. “My name is Susan Hargrove. A young man in my house told me to contact a man named Jericho. He just died. Some men shot him.” She said. Max made for the radio but Jericho stopped her with his hand.

“I am very sorry ma’am about what happened. Did anything else happen?” Jericho asked. “Yes, they took my grandson. I tried to call the police but it looks like my phone line was cut.” Susan said. Max grabbed the radio from Jericho. “Mom, it’s Max. This Jericho guy was helping us out. I don’t have time to explain but I am getting my son back.” She said. Max then looked at Jericho, fire in her eyes. “Right?” She asked. Jericho nodded and looked to the hogtied Saverio. “Oh, I know just who to ask.” Jericho said.

### *Hopper Cabin*

The pair had no idea how long they held each other. Many tears were shed as El let the last fifteen years out of her. When she finally stopped crying, she looked up and saw that Joyce was still holding her for dear life.

“The cabin changed a bit.” El said. Joyce smiled and nodded. “Yea, your dad wanted to renovate the furniture. Make it a nice place where we could get away from town.” She said. El looked at her curiously. Joyce helped her up and walked her to the living room.

They came back to the wall of pictures, and she showed her the picture of Hopper in front of City Hall, with Will holding a book while Hopper had his hand on it. “This was from when Hop was sworn in as Mayor. It wasn’t much of an election. After her retired as Chief, the city just couldn’t get enough of him and made him Mayor.” Joyce explained. El nodded, then pointed to Will and the other man he was with.

“Oh, that’s Chad, Will’s boyfriend.” Joyce said. El still looked

confused. "Will likes other boys. Everyone accepted it, except for a few dipshits." Joyce said. "Why would people not accept him?" El asked. Joyce smiled. "Some people have very backwards thinking." She said. El merely nodded. If Will was happy, then so was she.

They found their way to the picnic photo. And Mike and Max. Joyce noticed El stiffen upon seeing them. She put an arm around her. "That's Harrison. Max had a son with Mike. The two of them were cute together. But things didn't work out." Joyce explained. El relaxed a little. Logically, she thought it ridiculous for Mike to wait around for her. She wondered how many girls he was with.

"If you ask me, he still had his heart set on you." Joyce said, as if she read her mind. "It came as a surprise when Will told me they were dating. Max and Lucas had fights but never like this, but I think things worked out. Hell, everyone is so close together they all became amazing uncles and aunts." Joyce said. El nodded, focusing on the baby in Max's arms. She closed her eyes.

*She was in the void. The black infinity she used to go to when she needed to search for someone. El looked around and found herself in the back of a van. Four soldiers were inside, two in the front, and two more in the back*

*They were strapping a small child to a modified restraint carrier. "Kid shouldn't be a problem." One of the soldiers said. "Yea, lets get the kid to Dr. Brenner. He is going to be prepped for surgery." The other said. El stiffened at hearing that. "Poor kid, brain will be mush when this is over." The driver said.*

El left the void and found herself on one of the recliners. Joyce was looking worried at her. "I need to get to Mike. His baby is in danger." El said. Joyce nodded and grabbed her keys.

### *Steel Mill*

Lopez and Ford moved Saverio to an abandoned foreman's office. Jericho was outside with Mike and Max. "So, they can get the information out of him?" Max asked. Jericho nodded. "If not, I have a few ways to screw with him." Jericho said.

Lucas came up to them, his own worry on his face. “Steve called to the station. He has officers looking out for him. Hell, Steve is about to head out himself.” Lucas said. Mike nodded. He was still feeling anxious. He was feeling helpless. Lucas looked at his friend and checked him. “You okay man?” He asked. Mike shook his head. “I thought i was the one they wanted. I thought they would leave my son alone.” Mike said. “Hey, we will get him back. You think that asshole is going to get away with any of this? Especially after tonight?” Lucas asked. Mike wasn’t sure. “He got away with hurting El for fifteen years.” Mike said.

“He won’t get away with this though. We will stop him man.” Lucas said. Mike nodded. He wasn’t sure about anything right now. Mike hadn’t felt this way in fifteen years. Not since El was taken. He remembered when he finally went home. His parents were gone for the day, Nancy was watching Holly. He became closer to his sisters that day.

Inside, Hopper walked to the foreman’s office. He figured he could get information out of Saverio. Hopper knocked on the door and the young Hispanic man, Lopez, answered. “Let me talk to him.” Hopper demanded. His tone brooked no argument. Lopez opened the door and Hopper walked in. Saverio looked up, keeping his face pleasant. “More the merrier.” He said.

Hopper hated this punk. The moment he saw him he just had a burning fury for him. Without much provocation, Hopper punched him in the stomach. Lopez and Ford looked in shock, but did nothing. It wasn’t like that wasn’t the plan. “You are going to tell me where you took Mike’s kid.” Hopper flatly state. Saverio smiled at him. “My head is full of secrets. Its hard to get into those.” He said. Hopper punched him across the face. Saverio laughed harder. “Oh, that’s that parental rage I heard about. Did you miss playing dad with your precious Eleven?” He taunted. Hopper’s eyes narrowed as he delivered a swift punch to his chest. Saverio laughed while spitting blood. “I bet Terry Ives admired how you took care of her daughter. Speaking of which, do you even remember her?” Saverio taunted. Hopper stopped when he heard the name. “What about Terry?” Hopper asked. Savario laughed harder.

“You don’t know? You are one dumb mothercuck.” Saverio said. “I

think I will tell you.”

#### *14 years ago: Project Argus facility*

The cold observation room had only one occupant. A lone girl who was brought in a year ago. Her formerly long brown hair was shaven off, only clothes on was a hospital gown and basic underwear. The scientists and troops were having a hard time with getting her to do what they wanted. They tried to get her to move things, she would roll her eyes. One of the guards got frustrated and beat her severely. All she did was smile at him.

Saverio watched from the observation room, her face was covered in healing bruises and her wrists had restraint marks. She looked like she had no cares in the world. Saverio realized she didn't care about herself, so he proposed an idea to Dr. Brenner. He approved and acquired a few assets.

Saverio walked in the room, carrying a cat inside a cage. He placed it on the table and spoke simply to Eleven. “Kill the cat.” He said. El looked at him and rolled her eyes. She wasn't impressed with him. He was wearing a fancy dress shirt and slacks. Even his shoes were Italian leather. Saverio smiled at her. “Kill the cat.” He repeated. “Go to hell.” She said. Saverio nodded.

“You think that your life is over that we will simply kill you if you don't cooperate?” Saverio asked. El shrugged her shoulders. Saverio smiled and waved in some guards to bring in a tv monitor. “I read a report that your last guard thought about forcing himself on you. That was kind of funny.” Saverio said reading the report. It led to a new meaning of fucking yourself. “I won't do that. I fuck women, not objects.” He said. El still rolled her eyes. It was another thing that they tried to do to break her. They referred to her as an it rather than as a person.

“Well, if your not going to kill the cat on your own. I'll motivate you.” He said turning on the monitor. El looked at the picture and her eyes went wide. It was another room, with her mother, still catatonic, being covered in a liquid. Her aunt Becky was also there, tied to a chair with a ball in her mouth. “We picked them up two days ago. Now, we just coated your birth giver in gasoline. Now kill

the fucking cat or I will have my men cook hotdogs over your mom's burning remains." Saverio snarled. El looked at the cat. It was a small black cat that looked on her for help.

With tears in her eyes, she moved her head and broke the cat's neck. She hoped she made it painless for the creature. Saverio smiled. He pulled out his radio. "Go ahead." He said. El looked up just in time to see a man with a blowtorch light the gasoline on her mother. Becky was screaming as the flames enveloped her sister. Terry did not move as her body charred.

"Damn, I expected her to move around a little." Saverio said. El looked at him with fury. "Your promised!" She said. "I make promises to people, not to property." Saverio said. El raged and tried to break his neck with her powers. The guards around her hit her with cattle prods and she fell to the ground. Saverio kneeled next to her. "Now, if you be a good little bitch, I'll keep your aunt alive. If not, I will make her exit from the world the most painful she experiences." He said. El snarled at him as Saverio used his own cattle prod on her.

### *Three years later*

El was in her combat jumpsuit. It was a tight, form fitting suit that Saverio liked for her to wear as another form of humiliation. They were in an obstacle course that was inside the massive facility. Saverio spent the next three years training her body for combat. She got so good, they fixed a shock collar on her. The man who put it on her was a sad German man named Dr. Strauss. He also seemed to be a prisoner of the facility. She felt bad for him. But she tried not to show attachment. Saverio loved to torment her with the knowledge that if Brenner gave him the okay, he would bring Mike in and make her torture him.

Today was a live fire day. El had to dodge Saverio and his men's bullets. He moved up from using paint or pellets. Now she had to go through the course, avoid machine gun fire and kill a prisoner at the end. This was not her first time doing it. She had to kill them quickly, or she had to watch Saverio disembowel them. She learned that the hard way.

"Okay bitch, time for the exercise." Saverio said, calling from one of the bunkers around. The course looked like a residential neighborhood. She was to escape and avoid the gunmen. She could not engage them. That meant they were using Saverio's men, not mercenaries.

The buzzer sounded and El ran as bullets whizzed past her. El wasn't allowed to use her powers to fight back, but she could use them to deflect. She ran past a few of the houses, dodging one house that was rigged with C4. She flipped over two men who ran out of a house and ran behind a wall. She saw the target building, a small hut between two bunkers. Saverio was in one, manning a light machine gun. He loved to participate in these exercises. El focused and ran as fast as she could, using her powers to boost her speed. She ran so fast, Saverio barely registered her. She entered the hut and saw the prisoner bound to a chair. Without thinking, she broke the prisoner's neck and broke the chair, leaving the hooded person on the floor. A buzzer sounded. The exercise was over.

Saverio walked in, pleased with the results. "Take the hood off, go see your victim." He said. Saverio liked to do this. Most of the prisoners she was forced to kill were people Saverio had issues with. But he loved telling her their life stories. It added to her nightmares. Slowly, El removed the hood, she gasped as she saw.

Her head was shaved, her face covered in scars and bruises, but it was unmistakable that it was her aunt Becky. Horrified, she fell to her knees. Saverio's laugh was ringing in her ears. "Yea, I got bored with her. Plus I think my wife knows a little about what I did." He said. El turned, rage contorting her face. "I DID WHAT YOU WANTED!" El screamed. Saverio smiled and hit the shock collar. El fell to the ground, twitching from the shock. "And I said, I don't make promises to things." Saverio said as he kicked her in the face, knocking her out.

### *Present.*

"She was good, but I always needed to remind her of her masters." Saverio said as he finished his tale. Hopper, Lopez and Ford just looked angry. Before Hopper could deliver another bearing, Lopez stopped him. "No bro, I got an idea. I have a battery and some

jumper cables.” He said. Hopper looked at him and relented. But not before kicking Saverio and knocking him back.

“You are about to be very fucking sorry asshole.” Lopez said. He motioned for Ford to watch him as he led Hopper out. “I dunno if shocking his nipples will work.” Hopper said. Lopez smiled, “I ain’t attaching to his nipples.” He said.

Saverio sat in the chair, Ford lifted him up and watched the door. Saverio smiled as he moved his wrists, the beating doing what he needed. “You must think I am some sicko.” Saverio said. He saw Ford nod. “I hope you know, you won’t piss right for a while.” Ford said. Saverio shuddered, he knew where they were going to shock him. “Well I will tell you what I really am.” He said. Ford didn’t care. “I’m not tied to the chair.” He said. Ford turned around just in time for Saverio to grab his head and smash the back of his head to a wall several times, knocking him out. Saverio took Ford’s knife and radio. He quickly left the office, noticing nobody was guarding the place. Saverio smiled as he made his way outside.

He found one of the jeeps, it was still running. Now he needed some breathing room. Sneaking to the large trailer that Jericho and his men were at, he went to several tires and sliced them open with his knife. He made his way to one of the jeeps, just in time to notice Lopez and Hopper walking out carrying a portable battery and jumper cables. He eased on the gas and slowly drove off. Careful not to arouse any suspicion as he drove off.

When he was sure he was away, Saverio used the radio and punched in a secret frequency. “This is Saverio, any of my men still around?” He asked. He got an answer. “We read you boss. We have the Wheeler brat. We will meet you at RV Echo.” The voice said. Saverio smiled, he was on his way to salvaging this mess.

Lopez and Hopper came to the office and found the door open. Hopper pulled out his pistol and rushed in. Ford was on the ground, injured with a head wound. “Shit, he escaped.” Hopper said. He checked Ford and found a pulse. “We need a medic.” Hopper said. Lopez nodded and called for help.

Suzie was treating the young man for his head wound when Jericho

entered. "He going to be okay?" Jericho asked. Suzie nodded. "He might need to take it easy for a few days." She said. Jericho nodded. "Any leads on Saverio?" She asked. Jericho shook his head. "He slashed the tires. A few of my men took the jeeps, but it looks like the bastard got away." He said. Suzie nodded, she hated this happened.

While everyone was trying to change the tire on the trailer, A black sedan rolled in. Two men pointed weapons, but Hopper stopped them. "That's my wife." He explained. The soldiers lowered their weapons and went back to their watch. Joyce left the car, and hugged her husband. "I brought someone." She said. Hopper looked as the passenger door opened and El walked out meekly. Hopper's eyes widened at seeing her. "El?" He asked. She nodded, still shy. Hopper walked up to her and pulled her into a massive bear hug. El returned the hug as the pair were reunited. "I missed you so much." Hopper said. El nodded. "I know, cause I missed you so much." She said, her tears returning. The Party wondered what was going on and converged on Hopper.

She let go of Hopper and saw her friends. They were older, but sill looked like the giant dorks she remembered them as. She saw the woman that Joyce said was Suzie, Dustin's wife. She looked meekly at her as the group was in anticipation. "Hey, I'm back." El said, trying to cut the tension. The group chuckled slightly as she awkwardly tried to cut the tension. Only Max was looking down and away from her. El walked up to her friend and pulled her into a hug. Max returned the gesture. "I'm not mad at you Max." She said. She looked at both Mike and Max and smiled at them.

"This si all heartwarming and shit, but we kind of are in a crisis." Jericho said, arriving. El nodded at the man. "I know where they are taking your son." El said to Max and Mike. They looked shocked at her. "Where is he being taken to?" Mike asked. El looked grim. "Its called Project Argus. It's a lab outside Chicago." She said.

*RV Echo*

Saverio parked his jeep, seeing his troops waiting by an moving truck. Saverio entered the back and saw the crying child, who stopped on seeing Saverio. "Are we good to go?" He asked. His men nodded. "Good, get me Dr. Brenner. Tell him we are on our way." He

said.

## **END ACT 2**

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Ya'll ever look at your old fanfics and go "god damn is this ghastly"? Cause i was reading a fic i had on ff.net and oh dear god was that bad. 2006 me was very bad at writing. Now i am older and hopefully better. Anyway, tell me what ya'll think of the end of act 2. EDIT: I said in a previous chapter that Brenner's lab was in Illinois, i have changed that to be true in this chapter.

## 12. Chapter 11

### Chapter 11

“On the surface, Project Argus was a means of advanced surveillance. Using modern technology, the United States could spy on anyone, anywhere.” Dr. Strauss began. The group set up inside the steel mill. Eleven was standing off to the side, looking out the window. Mike was looking at her, trying to keep himself from staring. In his heart, she believed she was still beautiful. When he looked away he caught mostly everyone smirking at him. Mike blushed and continued listening to Strauss.

“The real reason for Project Argus was one man’s obsession with immortality. Dr. Brenner has been using the federal government to use their resources. His plan involves transferring brain waves. His first experiment was Miss Eleven here.” Strauss said indicating to Eleven. “He used a prototype of wireless waves to hijack her mind. For five years, he had been studying how he could permanently move into a new body. Older people are harder for him due to our own will fighting them off. So he started testing younger prisoners.” Strauss said looking away. Mike noticed a few tears in both Strauss’s eyes and Eleven’s.

Max was remaining as calm as possible, but she was worried. Mike looked down and realized his leg was shaking. He tried to calm it down, but it wasn’t working. Jericho noticed and handed him a piece of gum.

“I find chewing gum helps when I get worried.” He whispered. Mike nodded and took the strip. He began chewing. He found his anxiety starting to lessen, but thinking of Harrison alone and scared was hurting him. Mike looked over at Max and saw she was gripping Lucas’s hand for dear life. She was trying to keep her face brave but when she looked at El, she realized that fate could befall Harrison.

“What do you mean, ‘using younger prisoners’?” Suzie asked. Strauss looked grim. “He started with Eleven, but found both her own powers and her strong will would eventually remove him after a few hours. Then a boon came. Saverio’s wife was leaving him and so he brought

both her and his ten year old daughter. Brenner tested his machine on her. Saverio's daughter, he was able to stay inside her mind for a week before her body began shutting down. When it was over...." Strauss trailed off.

"I knew Saverio was a sick fuck, but his own kid?" Jericho said. Strauss nodded. "His cruelty was enabled by Brenner. But that's not even the worst part of his plan. Right now, he has the building blocks to upload his mind to a series of machines. But he needs a few months to incubate. His own body won't handle the strain." Strauss said. Suzie picked up the theory. "He needs a young body to keep his mind alive. But why now?" Suzie asked.

"He is dying. Use of the machine to take over minds and his own advanced age has given him a month to live. The machine won't be ready for a few months. A child as young as young Mr. Wheeler would keep him alive long enough for him to be uploaded. Then, the real terror begins." Strauss said.

"He will be everywhere. Uploaded into the internet, he will then start his next phase. He wants to take over the world." Eleven said, still looking outside. Everyone looked around slightly shocked. Dustin broke the silence. "So we have to stop a mad scientist from taking over the world?" He asked, slightly incredulous. El nodded. "Ya'll do realize this sounds nuts right?" Jericho asked. His men all nodded. Even Mike thought this was slightly crazy. But having seen what Brenner was doing to another person, it was in the realm of possibility he would also do more nefarious things

"So, what do we do?" Will asked. Mike looked up to his friend. "I don't know about the rest of you, but I am going to get my son back. I won't ask anyone to come with me." He said getting up. "Hey, dumbass!" Max called. Mike turned around and saw most of the party following him. "You are not doing this lone paladin horse shit. Besides, he's my son also. I'm also getting him back." Max said. "And I am shoving my foot up Brenner's ass." Lucas said. Mike smiled as his friends came together into a group hug.

"That's all well and good, and the kumbaya is a nice touch, but do any of you think your plucky attitudes are going to get you through the day." Jericho said walking out. His men followed him as well. "I

told my men, once our job with you was done I was going to spend time screwing Brenner over.” He said. Mike smiled. “You sure you don’t wanna join the group hug?” Mike asked. Jericho merely flipped him off.

One of Jericho’s men entered the mill, he was one of the mechanics. “Boss, command center is ready to roll.” He said. Jericho nodded. “We need to take multiple vehicles. We are all assaulting Project Argus.” He declared.

### *Project Argus*

Dr. Ryan was called in the middle of the night, he was told by Brenner’s assistant that it was time. Hugh merely acknowledged the call and headed for the facility. One the surface, Project Argus looked like a state of the art hospital, but underneath, it housed a state of the art prison and lab complex. The top five floors were used for the research while the two basement levels were for testing. Dr. Ryan parked in his usual spot as he made his way past security. He also noticed there were more guards. Dr. Ryan put it out of his mind as he headed for Dr. Brenner’s office.

He made his way to the sterile office, finding Brenner now in a wheelchair and dressed in a suit. “I see you are not taking bedrest.” He said amused. Brenner smiled at him from his oxygen mask. “We had an exciting night. We lost Subject Eleven, but we did manage to procure a child. When Saverio brings it here, you will begin the preparations.” Brenner said. Ryan nodded.

“With the loss of Subject Eleven, what are the odds it won’t come back and claim revenge?” Ryan asked. Brenner chuckled softly. “It will indeed come back, and Mr. Wheeler will also come. We took his child for the experiment.” He said. Ryan could feel a headache coming, For all of Brenner’s brilliance, he still had the very human fallibility of arrogance. “I don’t see our guards protecting us if they come.” Ryan said.

“Saverio will keep them busy while the upload is prepared.” Brenner said. Ryan nodded, he was indeed getting a headache. “So your trusting our safety to that guy?” He asked. Brenner nodded. “He is as loyal as a dog.” Brenner said.

"He may be loyal as a dog, but he is as effective as a chihuahua." Ryan said. He didn't like Saverio. Hell most of the staff hated him. But Brenner kept him around. "Saverio has his uses. He will keep us safe while I am uploaded to the child. From there, we will head to the other facility to wait completion of the machine." Brenner said.

"What about the other machine you have here?" Ryan asked, looking out on the testing area. Brenner shook his head. "I can stay in that one for a while, but its not yet ready for me to fully move in." Brenner said. Ryan put on a pair of gloves and examined Brenner. He was as fit as ever for the experiment.

"How long till Saverio arrives?" Ryan asked. "He reached the airfield fifteen minutes ago. He should be here with the subject in a short while. Will preparations take long?" Brenner asked. "It should take me four hours to get ready." Ryan said. "Then assemble your team, Saverio is landing soon." Brenner said.

### *Command Trailer*

Most of the Party was inside the massive RV, special made for to serve as Jericho's mobile command center. It had two large trailers, the second used for sleeping quarters. The only ones not coming on the rescue mission were Joyce, Will's boyfriend Chad, Robin and Steve. Robin and Steve needed to handle things in town while Joyce and Chad were making calls at the Mayor's residence. Hopper was going on the trip come hell or high water.

The inside was rather cozy, it was fairly large, enough for everyone to sit comfortably. El sat with Mike toward the back. Both just sat together, not speaking. El could tell Mike was worried. He often had a far off look when he was worried, thinking of ways to fix a situation. She remembered when he had that look before she went to shut the gate down. He also had that look when Starcourt burned down. She knew he was worried about his son.

El placed her hand in his and squeezed it. "We will get him back Mike." She said, trying to be confident. The truth was, even she had no idea how this would work. She spent fifteen years being tortured and experimented on, she hoped she could have the strength to go inside and finish Brenner off. Mike merely nodded, not trusting his

own emotions.

Dr. Strauss was sitting by Lopez, the young soldier taking a shine to the old man. Lopez was building a small cattle prod into his cane. "So, what are the odds we can shut that place down?" Lopez asked. Strauss shrugged. "Brenner got where he has by doing many favors for important members of every administration. Destroying the facility is the first step. His political friends will be another problem." He said. Lopez nodded, he knew all about well connected bad guys. "Why did Brenner want you?" Lopez asked.

Strauss took a deep breath. "I worked in Germany in the 1930's. I was a young scientist when Hitler came to power. I was gullible and listened to the madman." Strauss said. He rolled up his sleeve and revealed an old swastika tattoo. "I was assigned to work with Dr. Josef Mengele. I helped him with his experiments." Strauss said. "One of the prisoners at Auschwitz was an old neighbor of mine. She was not Jewish, just a political dissident. I tried to save her, but Mengele had her executed. I became disillusioned with everything. I secretly started helping prisoners escape. But it wasn't enough. I was still assisting Mengele. Eventually the Soviets were due to arrive and Mengele ran off. The prisoners helped me escape as well. That was how I met my wife. We went to America we're we flourished for years, until thirteen years ago when Saverio and his men took my family. Brenner told me he would return them to me if I helped with his cyber soldier program. The VR training was something I built. I also built many of the devices used by Eleven." Strauss said. Lopez nodded, his heart breaking for the man. "I kept Eleven in my lab, treating her wounds, and also educating her. Brenner and Saverio left me to my duties as they felt they had me in control. " Strauss finished.

"Well, we can handle things. You just worry about not getting shot." Lopez said. Strauss nodded, turning his attention to Eleven and the young man she told him about.

El looked up to Mike. "Tell me about him." She asked. Mike smiled softly and pulled out his wallet. Inside was a picture of the two at the zoo. Mike was sitting him on his lap while Harrison had on a monkey hat. El smiled at seeing them. "He is a little ball of energy. Hates to sit still. When I have him at my placehe just lights everything up. He

loves monkeys and I have a stuffed monkey at my apartment....” Mike said as tears began to burst out. El put her arms around him as he cried. “I just miss him so much.” Mike said.

“Well, suit up. Because you’re not getting him back dressed like that.” Jericho said. Mike looked up to find black BDU’s thrown at him. “Get yourself cleaned up. We will be there in an hour.” Jericho said. Mike nodded and headed into the bathroom.

Jericho walked away and resumed his planning session with Hopper. El watched the room and saw the girl hanging with Dustin show an interest toward her. She was dressed in scrubs while also wearing a bulletproof vest. El gave her a slight smile and the girl walked over to her. “Hiya, I guess we never got to meet. I’m Suzie.” She said extending her hand. El took it and was struggling to remember the name. “Dustin and I met at science camp years ago. I think he might have mentioned me?” Suzie asked. Realization dawned on El as she remembered. “He kept calling you on the radio....He called it Cerebra.” El said.

“CereBRO, gosh El, get your references right.” Dustin called back with a laugh. El smiled slightly. “Max and I always wanted another girl in our group.” She said. Suzie smiled at her. “It will be good.” Suzie said. She didn’t have much to say, mostly because all she ever heard about El was from stories. “We are here if you need us.” Suzie said as she walked back to Dustin, who was having an animated conversation with Smiley about computer networks.

Will sat down next to her. She never got a good look at him since she regained her mind. His bowl cut was long gone, replaced by longhair kept in a ponytail. “I need to be honest. I didn’t think I would ever see you again.” Will said. El was glad he was still blunt. “I didn’t think I would either.” She said. “Mike never really gave up hope till we raided a lab in Chicago. To think you were moved somewhere else.” Will said. El nodded. “This lab is more heavily defended. The one in Chicago itself had limited security, but I was kept drugged a lot.” El said. Will nodded. “I am sorry I gave up on you.” Will said. El shrugged her shoulders. “Mike is an eternal optimist. I can forgive you for being realistic.” El said. Will smiled slightly and pulled El into a tight hug. El returned it, happy to be with her brother.

Jericho sat with Hopper, going over most of the plans they had. “We will scout the facility from the edge of the woods. Hopefully their security is lax.” Jericho said. Hopper shook his head. “They know we are coming, they would be fools to not expect us.” Hopper said.

### *Project Argus*

Saverio entered the medical center looking like a conquering hero. Granted he was bruised and bleeding from his interrogation earlier, but he still had a smug look on his face. Two men entered behind him, carrying the carrier for the toddler. He was awake and crying, demanding his mommy. Saverio laughed. “You ain’t seeing your bitch mommy ever again.” He mocked to the child. Dr. Ryan rolled his eyes as the man was mocking a toddler.

“Well Saverio, if you are quite done mocking the toddler, we can begin work.” Ryan said. Saverio gave him a winning smile and directed the men to bring the screaming toddler into the prep room. “I trust you don’t need medical attention?” Ryan asked Saverio.

Saverio shook his head, he took worse lumps before. “I’ll be fine. I just wanna see how this kid melts later.” Saverio said. Ryan rolled his eyes. “You might want to work on that later. Dr. Brenner wants you to mount a defense of the lab.” Ryan said. Upon hearing Brenner’s orders, Saverio got serious and nodded. “I’ll get things locked down.” He said and he exited the room.

### *Outside Project Argus, one hour later*

Jericho had the trailer parked a few miles up the road. He sent a few men ahead to scout the lab while he got the weapons ready. Most of them changed into black BDU outfits. Jericho was putting black paint in a stripes over his face. The Party did no such things. Jericho walked up to Mike, who was putting a holster around his waist. “You still have that gun I gave you?” He asked. Mike nodded and moved to hand Jericho the revolver. He put a hand up. “Keep it. I have a few more like it.” Jericho said. Mike nodded and put the revolver back in the holster. He then picked up an MP5 machine gun. “Glad you’re not grabbing something you can’t use.” Jericho said.

“Better for tight corridors. Also I am pretty good at using this.” Mike

said as he put the strap around his shoulders. Jericho nodded as he grabbed his M4 carbine. He had it modified with an underbarrel grenade launcher and red dot sight. He was quite impressed with it.

El looked over the guns, grabbing a glock 19 modified for automatic fire. She also grabbed several throwing knives. She could use these easier than any firearm. Upon inspection, she found a large curved knife. She picked it up and was impressed with the weight. Lopez came up to her as she inspected it. "That's a kukri, knife from India. It's a handy little blade." Lopez said handing her a sheath for the blade. El accepted it and placed the blade on her belt, then wrapped herself in her trench coat.

Max walked up to Mike. He nodded to her as she approached. "Is it weird that honestly I am scared to death right now?" Max asked. Mike shook his head. "I'm scared to. But we are getting him back. And I am putting a bullet between that fuckers eyes for touching him." Mike said, his eyes blazing with fury. "Save some for the rest of us." Max said as she hugged Mike. El walked up to the two of them. "Max, do you mind if I can talk to Mike for a minute?" El asked. Max smiled at her and nodded as she walked off.

El walked behind the trailer with Mike following her. When she was sure nobody was around, she turned to Mike. "What is it El?" Mike asked. Before he could react, she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. It was a passionate kiss that El hadn't felt in her soul in a very long time. They felt like they were getting back to knowing each other. Mike broke the kiss off and kept looking into her eyes.

They were interrupted by hoots and hollers. The pair looked and saw everyone staring at them. El glared at the group while Mike flipped them off. "Bunch of assholes." Mike said. El nodded. Ford returned a moment later with his rifle. "Got the news. That place is a fortress." He said. The group gathered around as Ford laid out the lab.

"Snipers on the roof and in a guard tower overlooking the road. Only way in safely looks like a parking garage, but that's locked down." Ford said. "That won't be a problem." El said. "The problem is the Abrams out front." Ford said. Jericho merely nodded. "Let's go look for ourselves. We can handle whatever issues we have." Jericho said. They nodded and headed out, grabbing their gear.

It was a short walk to the lab, the five story hospital that had been El's prison for fifteen years. El glared at the facility. Jericho and Hopper observed the place with binoculars. "Lots of assholes at the front. That tank looks to be guarding a solid wall." Hopper said. El shook her head. "The entrance is concealed. Saverio knows that's a better entrance." She said. "If we can get a bead on those snipers, we should be able to take them from above." Jericho said. El merely nodded and took flight. Hopper tried to stop her. "Still does this shit." Hopper growled as he looked on with his binoculars.

El floated slowly down, the snipers covering corners. El smiled as she realized they didn't look up. She pulled out the kukri and lowered herself near the first sniper. She threw the blade and used her abilities to guide it into the back of his head. She looked over and directed the blade right at another sniper's eye as he turned around. A third sniper saw the commotion and before he could reach for his radio, his neck snapped as if an invisible force grabbed him.

El grabbed the rifle and pulled the scope off. She looked at the guard tower and saw a lone sniper. She grabbed a throwing knife and quickly sent the blade down to hit the man in his eye. The man fell off the tower. El slowed his fall with her mind as he fell and landed in some bushes. El reached for the radio in her ear. "Snipers handled." She said. "Next time warn us when you go off on your own," Hopper growled. El smiled to herself. "No promises." She said. She could practically see Hopper rolling his eyes.

She looked down on the tank. One man on top manning the machine gun. El narrowed her eyes. "Anyone got a plan?" She asked. "Yea, can you see if anyone is in that tank besides the gunner?" Jericho asked. El nodded and pulled the man out of the tank quickly. The man was brought before El and she sealed his jaw with her mind. "You have friends in the tank?" She asked quietly. The man nodded. El saw the truth in his eyes and dropped him on his head onto the ground. Seeing the opening of the tank, she dropped in quickly, loading her fingers with knives. As she landed in the hole, she saw the three men looking confused. She then threw her knives at all three of them. "I have the tank, anyone know how to drive it?" El said as she threw the dead men out of the tank.

"I think me and Ford can drive it. But, I dunno if we should be firing

weapons of that size just yet." Jericho said. "We could use a distraction later though." El said. Jericho thought about the idea. "That's an idea." Jericho said.

A few moments later, Mike, Jericho, Hopper, Lucas, Will, Suzie, Nancy and Dustin were by the tank. The main door couldn't see them. "We go in teams. There is a sub basement that is where they most likely took Harrison. We can get there from here." El explained. Everyone nodded. El lifted the concrete barrier up a few feet, barely struggling to do so, and everyone crawled under as they entered. El went right behind them and shut the barrier quietly behind her.

Inside the small parking garage, El saw the lone guard still at the bottom of the ramp. He didn't seem to notice the group arrive. Max pulled out her rifle and took aim. She fired and the loud bang from the rifle resulted in a dead guard. "Yea, lets hope there aren't any guards here." Hopper said. Mike nodded. "We don't go loud till we need to." He said to the others. El could arrange that.

They made their way in and saw several cars down there. "This is Dr. Ryan's team." El said simply. She remembered them from the other experiments. "Who the hell is Dr. Ryan?" Lucas asked. "One of Brenner's cohorts. We need to hurry. He is preparing Harrison for mind transfer." El explained.

The group rushed to a door she vaguely remembered being brought through. Using her mind, she broke the door off the hinges. "This way, the sub basement lab is large. But I think we can get to the hospital wing quickly." El explained.

The group walked in and let El guide them. They walked through into what looked like a group room, with patients around. They all looked lost, like they didn't realize they were there. "What the hell is this?" Hopper asked. "This is where Brenner keeps prisoners he has no use for but wants to punish. He had them all lobotomized." El said. Jericho looked around and saw one prisoner. "I know this guy." He said as he looked at the man. He was about Jericho's age, but looked emaciated from lack of exercise. "He ran a crew that I did business with. They vanished several years ago." Jericho said. El looked at him and recognized him as well. "They were brought in to train me. When I was made to kill a few of them, they turned on

Brenner. Saverio captured them and Dr. Ryan lobotomized them.” El explained.

Jericho looked at her in shock. He wondered if that was a possible fate for him and his men. There were more men walking around, and a couple of women. “Who are these?” Will asked as he pointed to one woman. “Two of those are Saverio’s ex wives. I think the others might be some nurses who objected to how they treated me.” El said. “The rest look like the men who came to Hawkins fifteen years ago. Their enlistment ended and I guess Brenner wanted to keep this all a secret.” El said.

“I always knew Saverio was a sick fuck but this just takes the cake.” Jericho said. The man he was staring at looked up and stared back at him. “You ain’t seen anything yet.” The man said. It surprised Jericho as he stood up. “I knew you would come this way. And I had this prepared for a few years.” The man said. Suddenly everyone became active and aware they were in the room, and began speaking at once.

“This is the LEGION project.” They all said in unison. “You will not be making it out of here.”

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Gotta love a cliffhanger huh? Tell me what you think. Love hearing from ya'll

## 13. chapter 12

### Notes for the Chapter:

I can't sleep, story keeps bugging me. Oh and if anyone reads this on Fanfiction.net. I had to pull the last couple of chapters. apparently there is an error and new chapters are not posting.

### Chapter 12

The group was surrounded by the hospital gown clad zombies, for lack of a better term, and they did not seem prepared for this. One of the zombies spoke. "I figured you would come through here when you saw the troops I have out front. This was something Dr. Ryan had cooked up when we were first experimenting with mind transfer." He said. Jericho recognized the way he spoke.

"Whats the matter Saverio? Afraid to fight us yourself?" Jericho snarled. The man smiled. "I am facing you. I am directly controlling them all." Saverio said through the man. Jericho snarled and fired into the man and dropped him. Another zombie spoke up. "I think you remember the bible verse." Saverio said. "My name is Legion, for we are many!" Saverio said through all the prisoners.

"Let's see how you deal with this." El said as she used her powers to shockwave them back. Hopper and Will began firing shotgun blasts into the crowd. Jericho and Mike fired automatic fire into them as well. One grabbed at Dustin, but Suzie fired her pistol into the zombie's face. She covered him while he reloaded his submachine gun.

The group kept up fire as El used her powers to force back the horde. A voice cut through her concentration. "I would stop now if I were you." A voice said. El looked at a far corridor and a familiar face entered. Dark skin, brown eyes, head shaved. El could not mistake the person she saw. "Kali?" El asked.

The group stopped firing as they noticed the newcomer walking towards them. She was clad in only a hospital gown. Mike thought

something was off about her. “El, is this that sister you told me about?” He asked. El merely nodded. The woman walked slowly to them, the remaining horde falling back. “It’s been seven years Jane.” Kali said. “Seven years that you stole from me.” She said, her eyes blazing.

El was shocked, when Brenner took control she barely remembered what he did. Occasionally Saverio would brag about what she did but this was a new one. “You don’t remember? All the evil you did. Let me remind you. Let me show your friends.” Kali said as blood came out of her nose.

### *Seven years ago Arizona*

The Group found themselves in a suburb of Phoenix. “The hell is going on?” Jericho asked. Dustin piped in. “El said she had a sister who could manipulate illusions.” He said. Jericho was still not used to the supernatural.

A woman, Kali but with long black hair. Her face was tired but happy. She was dressed in her work clothes. She worked as a secretary for a large bank. Kali mused that she could easily rob the place blind, but that wasn’t her way anymore.

A few years ago, while her gang was in hiding, she met someone. A nice man who saw her out in the cold. He asked her if he could get her a coffee. Desperation made her agree. He talked to her for what seemed like hours. His dark skin was mesmerizing to her. He was an accountant from Georgia. He was staying in New York to help with an account.

Kali’s life changed that day. Her gang made fun of her for swooning over a man, his name was Jacob, but she didn’t care. She didn’t want revenge anymore, she just wanted him. She got a job as a waitress, one where they pay her under the table. She kept seeing Jacob. Her gang saw she was now no longer thirsting for revenge, rather just thirsting for her accountant friend. They pitched in and all of them got a nice apartment. One day Jacob came to her and said he was being transferred to Arizona, and he wanted her to come with him. Kali accepted. Her gang went their separate ways, promising to keep in touch.

Kali never told her husband about her life, merely lied to him with certain grains of truth. Kali entered their two story house, exhausted from the day she had. She was about to collapse on her couch when the phone rang. Kali groaned as she headed to the kitchen to answer the phone.

“Futch residence” Kali said as a greeting. “Kali, its Axel.” Came a frantic voice on the phone. Kali’s senses perked up. “Whats going on Axel?” She asked. “They found me, men in black vans are searching for me. You need to get away before the.....” The line went dead. Kali began panicking. Her panic was halted temporarily by a knock on the door.

Kali walked to the door and opened it, thinking it was a neighbor. She was greeted by something else. Black trench coat, a helmet, about Kali’s height. “Kali Prasad?” It asked. Kali shuddered slightly in fear. Nobody knew her original last name. “No, my name is Kali Futch.” She said. A laugh came from the synthesized voice. “I have waited a long time for this day.” It said, then it delivered a strong kick to Kali’s stomach.

Kali flew back, shocked by the strength this thing had. Kali quickly recovered as the thing entered her home. She delivered a swift punch that it easily dodged. Kali was out of fighting shape. And this thing seemed on top of its game. It grabbed her by her blouse and slammed her to the ground. Kali recovered and moved into the kitchen and grabbed a knife. She lunged at the creature, who grabbed her wrist, punched her hand, and dropped her knife. It then pulled Kali onto its shoulders, walked into the living room, and slammed her through the coffee table.

“Kali was bleeding, and in lots of pain. She used her powers to try and trick it into thinking she vanished. That just made it laugh. “Did you think that would work?” It asked. Kali cursed under her breath. “I have waited a long time for you Subject Eight.” The voice synthesizer ended and Kali recognized the voice. “Brenner?” She asked. She heard he was in high levels of government, but she would be small fish to him.

“I searched for you for so many years, my dear Kali. But now, I have a means of tracking you and your little friends.” Brenner said. He

touched a button on the side of the helmet and Kali saw brown eyes, fearful. "Jane." Kali said. Brenner flipped the visor and reached out with his hand. Kali felt herself being pulled up from the ground. Kali tried to struggle, but the power was way to strong.

"Mommy, is that you?" A tiny voice squeaked. Brenner turned his head and saw a tiny dark child, she was wearing shorts and a tshirt. Jacob also entered behind his child. "What is the meaning of this?" He demanded. A high cold laugh came from Brenner. Kali kept struggling. "Leave them alone you bastard!" She screamed. Jacob grabbed the child before she could run to her mother. "You put my mommy down!" She yelled. Brenner laughed. "Two more for transport." He said into a communicator.

Jericho noticed Saverio come up behind Jacob and shocked him with a cattle prod. He dropped the kid and as she ran, Saverio caught her and he handed her to one of his soldiers. He then stepped on Jacob's back and walked over him. "Every thing is secure sir." Saverio said. Brenner nodded and turned his attention to Kali. "The fun has just begun." He said as he squeezed Kali unconscious.

### *Present*

The illusion ended, and the room was back to the gore filled room where the horde ambushed them. Mike could hear clacking noises, almost like guns being loaded. "El, it's a trap!" Mike shouted. Soon enough, the paitents returned with automatic rifles. El reacted quickly and formed a bubble that deflected the gun fire. Kali smiled at her as she walked off.

Max saw a room, one that looked like a dorm setting and pointed. "We can get cover in their!" She shouted. Suzie nodded and fired at the window. El moved everyone close to the window and everyone piled through. Max noticed the room was empty. Nancy fired several rounds at the horde as she was the last through. "I need to go after her." El declared.

"What are you fucking nuts, we need you here!" Jericho said. El used her powers and slammed the horde back. "I'll be right back." She said as she ran through the door Kali left through.

"God damnit" Nancy said as she began laying suppressing fire. "How many troops came after El?" Nancy asked. "About a battalion?" Lucas shrugged as he set up his sniper rifle. "Fuck nuggets!" Suzie exclaimed.

Jericho pulled out his radio. "Lopez, go hot. I need back up here now!" Jericho shouted into the receiver.

### *Outside*

Lopez pulled the radio up to his ear. He heard Jericho shout, as well as the gun fire. "Loud and clear. Heading to you now." Lopez said. He nodded to Ford and Smiley. "Any one ever driven a tank?" Smiley asked. Lopez merely nodded. "It should give us protection from their small arms. Hope none of them have anti tank rounds." Lopez said as he got the tank in gear.

Jonathan watched as the tank began moving. He picked up his rifle and was about to join when the sniper, Weatherford, stopped him. "I need you to call special targets for me. And keep the doc here safe." He said pointing to Dr. Strauss. Strauss was hiding in a ditch that the other Bravo members dug up. He merely have them a thumbs up.

Jonathan looked through the binoculars and saw one man inside the fourth floor, setting up a missile. "Fourth floor, third window." Jonathan called. Jonathan saw the man's brains fly out of his head. Jonathan kept scanning, seeing men setting up RPG's. "Three on third floor." He called. Weatherford fired at one, who fired his own rocket down, hitting the waiting men below.

The men guarding the entrance began opening fire on the tank. Lopez smiled as they got frantic. He peered through the scope and indicated Ford to put a shell in the cannon. Lopez looked on and found several hiding behind a barricade. He fired and three men went flying, while those behind the barricade exploded in pink smoke.

Jericho heard the tank firing from where he was. "They are using the tank. Might have backup come soon." Jericho said as he changed magazines. He noticed he only brought three. "Lopez, tell them to bring more ammo." He said into the radio. "They heard you asshole. Now shut up and let me blow shit up." Lopez said. Hopper looked at

Jericho. "You let them talk to you like that?" He asked. Jericho shrugged. "They do their job well." He said. Max snarled at them. "LESS YAPPY, MORE SHOOTY!" She shouted as she fired a few more shotgun rounds.

El followed Kali into a dark corridor. Very few lights were on, and it was clear which way she was going. She walked into a room where she could clearly see Kali, standing with her back against a wall. "Kali, please. Brenner was controlling me. I had no idea." She said. Kali merely smiled. "Oh I know, I just wanted to get you away from that twink." Kali said. Before El could react, several men hit her with stun rods, knocking her to the ground. One guard threw Kali a shock collar. "I can't believe you fell for this. You would think you would know better you stupid bitch." Kali said as she attached the collar to her. "You think I was bad before, wait till you see what I have planned." She said sweetly to El.

El tried to fight back but the shock collar knocked her down. "If I could, I would have you go out there and kill your dumb friends." Kali said, sending another shock to El. One of the guards stepped on her hand as she tried to crawl away. Another reached over and pulled out her gun. "I think not." Kali said.

Mike fired into the horde, hitting those not fully hiding behind the makeshift cover several brought in. "I really fucking hate this guy." Mike said. Mike's own thoughts kept whispering to him, a warning. He knew El was in trouble but he couldn't get to the door without abandoning his friends.

Outside, Smiley got on top of the tank and used the Machine gun on top to fire at the soldiers. Many of them were turned into bags of blood by the gun fire. Lopez fired at those huddling behind cover.

Several soldiers ran for the entrance, Lopez saw and fired, blasting the entrance and killing the rest of the soldiers. "Guys, move up. Leave the tank." Lopez said as he led Ford and Smiley out.

Weatherford and Jonathan helped Strauss out of the ditch. "You think you can get us to Mike and the others?" Jonathan asked. Strauss nodded. "Project Legion. I didn't think the mad fool would use it." He said. A few more Bravo members arrived, carrying bags of

ammo and one carrying a large gun. "Think we need that in there?" Weatherford asked. The man shrugged. "Boss usually gets in weird situations." He said. Weatherford nodded and grabbed a few bags of ammo and the group ran down to the lab entrance.

Inside, Mike still couldn't get over the feeling of El in trouble. "Guys, El is in trouble. I need covering fire." He said. Hopper nodded and pulled out a grenade. "I'll give you some cover." He said and pulled the pin. He tossed it underhand, the horde did not stop firing, and several were killed by the explosion. Mike vaulted over the window and ran for the door. He rolled out of the way when the horde began firing again. He reached the door and pulled it open.

Rushing through, the voice in his head was telling him to calm down. Mike slowed his breathing and walked slowly. Mike had no idea how he was hearing this, but it reassured him that he would reach El. Mike lowered himself as he reached the room that the voice was leading him. He looked through and saw El on the ground. She was handcuffed and had a shock collar around her neck. The voice came to him and told him to shoot Kali. Mike was conflicted, not wanting to kill someone who was being controlled by Brenner. But the voice assured him, it was all right. Mike nodded, pulled out the revolver and fired into Kali's chest. She fell over. Mike rushed in, and fired the revolver four times, taking out three guys. The last one pulled El up and had a gun to her head. "Put the gun down or I'll mess this bitch up." He said. He looked down and he began screaming. He dropped El and began wiping imaginary bugs off of him. El took that moment and snapped his neck with her mind.

Mike rushed over to help her, looking for keys to the cuffs. "It's okay Mike. I got it." She said as she undid the cuffs with her mind. "J.j....jane." Kali called. El and Mike looked over and saw her bleeding out. El tried to use her powers to stop the bleeding but Kali stopped her. "It's okay. I'll get to see my family." She said, grabbing El's hand.

El had tears in her eyes as her sister lay dying. "They used my husband as training fodder for you. You didn't know, and I don't blame you. My daughter....Saverio made me watch as Brenner tested that machine on her. To see Brenner talking to me through her was the worst ever. Her body fell apart after a month. I had to watch.

They brought another baby here. Please, stop them.” She said, coughing up blood.

“We are here to stop this. Kali, were is the experiment taking place.” El demanded. She pointed to a door. “Two hallways down.” She said. El and Mike nodded and headed back to help their friends. “You, boy.” Kali called to Mike. He turned to face the dying girl. “Take care of my sister for me. If you don’t I’ll haunt you.....” Kali said as she died. Mike grabbed her lifeless hands. “With everything I have.” Mike said.

El still had tears in her eyes. “Let’s go, we need to help the others.” She said as she put her gun back in it’s holster. Mike nodded and the pair ran off to the sound of gun fire. They reached the door and stood on either side. “You ready?” Mike asked. El wiped her tears and nodded. They burst through the door, Mike firing his rifle, while El kept bullets from hitting them. The Horde kept coming through the doorways. El concentrated and dropped the ceiling on them, bottle necking them.

El heard a sound and looked over to see Bravo company arriving. Lopez, Ford, Smiley, Jonathan and Weatherford formed a firing line and began taking the rest of the horde apart. Jericho vaulted over the window, aimed his rifle, and fired the grenade launcher. He finished off the last of the horde that was in the room.

“Aww, no more.” Lopez said. Jericho growled at him. “Bring us some ammo?” Jericho asked. Lopez nodded and tossed him a magazine for his rifle. “All right, lock and load. I need this place secured.” Jericho said.

“We know where Harrison is, we need to hurry.” Mike said. Max nodded to them and followed Mike and El as they lead the way. Jericho indicated Strauss and Hopper should follow. “We will catch up.” Jericho said.

Max’s heart rate was racing. She hadn’t felt this way since Harrison superglued his hand to his face. She still wanted to deck that doctor who laughed at her. “How did you know El was in trouble.” She asked. Mike shrugged his shoulders. “I think Kali was reaching out to me. Maybe They were controlling her as well.” Mike said. El nodded.

"When I get my hands on this Dr. Ryan, I'll ask him nicely." El said

Hopper and Strauss caught up to them. They headed past the room with Kali's body, her face now peaceful. They continued on, heading for a surgical room. Mike looked in and saw several doctors and nurses, many being watched over by soldiers. "Great, more people to shoot." Mike said. El shook her head. "Leave this to me." She said.

El walked in, the soldiers got on alert, but they soon all had their necks snapped. "Dr. Ryan I presume?" She said to the doctor in deep blue scrubs and gown. The man reacted faster than El expected and put a needle into the unconscious toddler. "This is the stuff we used to knock you out. A large dose like this will kill the kid. Now back off." Ryan said. El's eyes narrowed at the man. One of the nurses though, walked around Ryan and with a swift blow, hit him upside the head with a bed pan. Another doctor rushed over and pulled the needle away from the child. Max and Mike rushed in and headed toward their child. He was unconscious from the drugs, his head was shaved and he had electrodes attached to his head. Mike began pulling them off of the boy while Max unstrapped him from the table. Ryan looked around and saw everyone was focused on the kid. He grabbed a scalpel and slowly stood up.

He stood behind the nurse who hit him. He then grabbed her and put the blade to her throat. "Back off and put the brat back, or I kill her!" Ryan said. Ryan was surprised when the nurse hit his face with the back of her head. Ryan fell back and was grabbed by Hopper and a burly doctor. "Strap him to the table." Max said, holding onto her son. Mike wanted to join the reunion, but he knew there were a few other problems.

"Where is Brenner?" Mike demanded. Ryan spit in his face. Mike wiped his face and punched Ryan in the stomach. "I have to put up with Saverio on a daily basis. You think your fucking breaking me?" Ryan snarled. El moved everyone out of the way. "I wonder how this makes you feel." El said. She concentrated and Ryan felt immense pain. "That's me crushing your testes. I can do much worse, like the inside of your epididymis." She said. Ryan screamed loudly as El began using her powers. "Fuck, not worth this." Ryan said. "He is in another room, machine room. Its where he uses the mind hacking machine." Ryan said. El nodded and used her powers to knock him

out. “We have to finish this.” El said. Mike nodded. Jericho and the others arrived, with Nancy rushing to Max to hug her nephew.

“Is there a server room?” Suzie asked. “I think we might need to get all the data here.” She said. Jericho nodded. “Curly, you go with your wife. Smiley go with them. You nerds have fun.” Jericho said. Strauss pointed them into the right direction.

El and Mike both walked through the surgery door and were quickly followed by Will and Lucas. Jericho assigned his men to lead the doctors and nurses out. “You idiots, be careful.” Jericho called. Mike turned and flipped him off with a smile.

The group entered into a large chamber. It was a dark purple. In the center, surrounded by machines, was Dr. Brenner. He was in a hospital bed. He was wearing an oxygen mask. Mike thought he looked pathetic.

“Eleven. Welcome home.” He said. El had to stop herself from shooting him. He was too good for that. “You took my life from me.” She snarled. Brenner laughed and it became a coughing fit. “My dear Eleven. Your life was mine to start with. Your abilities, your talents. Where would those be without me?” He asked.

“I would have lived a long and happy life with my friends.” She snarled. “Your friends? The ones who didn’t come for you in fifteen years? Don’t make me laugh.” Brenner said. “I always looked for her. I spent years looking. Your wrong Brenner.” Mike spat.

“You think I will believe you love this thing?” Brenner said. “I don’t love this thing. I love this woman. And we have lots of catching up to do.” Mike said, holding El’s hand. “He’s finished El. Just a sad old man. Let him rot here.” Mike said. El nodded and with one last look, the group walked away. El listened as Brenner began sobbing. El smirked as her foe was broken.

Brenner’s cries became harder till he began laughing. The group turned around to find a cap on his head with electrodes on it. “I am not finished yet.” Brenner declared. Before they could react, a massive pyramid came down, attached to the other electrodes. Brenner went limp as a loud growl was heard. Stepping out of the

shadows, was a large metallic body. It was clearly 12 feet tall, with a triangle metal face. It opened up to reveal a screen with Dr. Brenner's digitized face. A cruel smile formed. One arm was a massive claw while the other arm had a battering ram and a minigun. Its legs were skinny, but held the weight fine. "None of you are leaving here alive." Brenner declared.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Yes i know another cliffhanger. And i think i have two chapters to go. As always, read and review. I may take a couple of weeks due to my schedule at work getting full.

## 14. chapter 13

### Notes for the Chapter:

Ok, so that took a while. I am sorry for how long it took me to write this, but in my defense I was having a lot of fun with Assassin's Creed Valhalla. Yes, that is the excuse i am going with. I honestly thought i would work on it before Cyberpunk came out but that didn't happen. But, i decided to remove distractions and work on this. and work on this i did. My hans hurt from all this damn typing.

### Chapter 13

The massive machine fired it's minigun at the group and they all scattered. A massive glass panel came down and surrounded Brenner and the machines keeping him alive while his brain waves controlled the massive hulk. El tried to use her powers to cut his life support. To her surprise, she couldn't get through.

"I prepared for this eventuality my dear Eleven." Brenner cackled through the machine speakers. "This glass is bulletproof and also immune to your powers. My body is perfectly safe." He said with a wicked laugh. "As for this body, It also is immune to your powers." He said as he rushed at El. Will fired several rounds of his shotgun into the robot, making Brenner turn his attention over. "Did you think that would work?" Brenner sneered.

"No, but it did it's job." Will said with a smirk. Brenner looked over to see a piece of the floor brought up and slammed into Brenner. "I doubt your body is immune to that." El said.

Mike ran to the glass panel and began placing C4 on the panel. He worked quickly as Brenner began getting up from the ground. The metal beast roared and Mike found himself pulled away by El as Brenner fired his minigun. "We need to get away." El said. Mike nodded as he, Lucas and Will laid down suppressing fire. Brenner shrugged off the gun fire and began running at them.

As they ran out of the room, El toppled the entry and blocked Brenner inside. “We need to get out of here.” El said. The group nodded and kept running. As they ran down the hallway, a loud crash came from behind them as Brenner smashed through the wall. “Going somewhere?” Brenner asked. El pulled the ceiling on top of him. Mike could still hear a distinct laugh. “Yea, I doubt that slowed him down.” Mike said as he gathered the others to the surgical room where the others were waiting.

Nancy greeted them as they walked in, perked up at seeing them but soon became worried at the looks on their faces. “What the hell happened?” She asked. A loud crash answered her question. “Brenner has some kind of robot body.” Will said. Nancy’s eyes looked like they were going to bulge out of her head.

Jericho looked out the door and saw the massive robot. “Yea, they weren’t kidding.” He said calmly. “How the hell are you so calm?” Lucas demanded. Jericho merely motioned for his rifle and loaded a grenade in the under barrel grenade launcher. “Just getting used to the weird.” He said as he launched the round into Brenner. The blast knocked Brenner back a few inches and made Brenner laser focus on Jericho.

“Yea, I think I pissed him off.” Jericho said. Mike rolled his eyes. “We need to get out of here now.” He said. “Agreed, but I think we need to take our new friend.” Jonathan said indicating the unconscious Dr. Ryan. Lopez and Jonathan quickly unstrapped him from the table as Jericho fired another round at Brenner.

Quickly running out, they left the surgical room just as Brenner burst through the wall. “The Kool-Aid man does less property damage.” Jericho said. Will slapped his shoulder. “This is not the time for jokes!” He said. Jericho shrugged as he began running. “We scatter, meet at the surface.” Max said, cradling her sleeping child.

The group scattered away from the rampaging Brenner. Jericho, Mike and El went towards a security room. Nancy, Will, Lucas, and Max headed for where they entered the building from. Jonathan and Lopez dragged Dr. Ryan towards another surgical room. Brenner laughed as they ran. “I like playing games too.” Brenner laughed.

## *Computer Room*

“So why did you join up with a bunch of mercenaries?” Suzie asked Smiley as they entered a room filled with computers. It was used for data entry and they figured they could get some useful intel off of them.

“Jericho hired me. He is useless with computers. Hell he still types with his index fingers.” Smiley said. Dustin snorted when he heard that. “Scary guy like him still does that?” He asked. Smiley nodded. “He can be an evil genius. He typed like that to annoy this asshole who hates typing like that.” Smiley said.

“So, boss liked having me around. He asked if I wanted to work in a cubicle or do exciting things and see the world.” Smiley said. “Lopez trained me and we have been having fun ever since.” He finished.

“Well, hopefully we can help you guys out. Kinda wish we met under different circumstances. You guys seem nice.” Suzie said.

“Hey asshole.” Jericho’s voice came through the radio. “Yea Boss?” Smiley asked. “Dr. Brenner has a robot body or some shit. Find me solutions NOW!” Jericho demanded. “Yea Boss, we got this.” Smiley said.

“Robot body?” Dustin asked. “Man they have so much fun when I leave.” Dustin shrugged. He went to another work station and began looking through files. Smiley did the same. As they worked, they didn’t notice newcomers enter the room.

Smiley felt the hairs on the back of his neck perk up. He looked up from his work station and found several men enter the room. Their eyes were glazed over and they all had scars on their heads, indicating they were more of those zombies Saverio was controlling. “Oh shit.” Smiley said, alerting Suzie and Dustin.

“Look what I found, some nerds away from their protectors.” Saverio said through one of the men. Dustin nodded to Suzie and quickly flipped a table to give them cover as Smiley fired into the group. The zombies did the same and flipped a table for cover.

Suzie picked up her submachine gun, looked over her cover and fired into the table the zombies were hiding behind. The bullets clanged off, revealing the wood surface had steel underneath. Smiley moved away, walking around, cocking his shotgun and jumped them. He fired several rounds, taking the close group out. “Not so helpless nerds are we?” Smiley said.

Suzie checked her laptop and breathed a sigh of relief that it was intact. The other computers were sadly toast. “We need to find another way to get the intel on Brenner’s robot thing.” She said. Dustin nodded. “If we can find a server room, we might be able to get into the data directly.” Dustin said. Smiley nodded. As they left, they did not notice their fallen foes had their radios set to receive and Saverio had an idea of where to intercept.

Dustin followed the signs that led to the server room. Building this size must have either multiple rooms or one large one. Dustin was hoping for the later. “Do we have a plan?” Dustin asked. Smiley shook his head. “I can try calling the boss man.” He said grabbing his radio.

“Yea, Wheeler has you guys on the cameras. He says you need to watch out. That prick Saverio has got men all around. And I think he is directly controlling them.” Jericho said into the radio. “I’ll try to keep track but we have a few problems of our own.”

El could hear the machine stalking outside. She was worried about the others, but she couldn’t seem to make a dent in him. Even Jericho using grenades just slowed it for a moment. She had another idea, but she only tested it once. She wasn’t sure it would work.

“Ok, I am getting some guys together. They will back up Smiley and the Hendersons. Hey that’s a band name.” Jericho said. “Or a shitty sitcom.” Mike retorted.

“I think we need to get everyone out of here.” El said. Jericho nodded. “Yea, the problem is, we go head to head with that thing and we are toast.” Jericho said. “I might have a way to fight him.” El said. She concentrated her powers on her fist and punched the ground. She shattered the floor slightly. Both Jericho and Mike were stunned.

"I just learned to do that. Dr. Strauss showed me how when I wasn't being monitored." El explained. The pair nodded. "Still too dangerous. We need active intel on that thing." Jericho said.

"We can't exactly wait." El said. She pointed and saw Brenner heading to where Max and the others were hiding. "God damn it." Jericho said. El didn't want a debate, she ran out of the room and headed for Brenner. Before either men could object, she slammed the door and ran.

### *Upstairs*

Dustin could feel himself being watched. He was uneasy wondering if Saverio was plotting something. Smiley kept point, but even Dustin could tell he was nervous. They decided to take the stairs, just in case the elevator was booby trapped. Suzie found a large server room was on the fourth floor of the building.

They left the stair well, and ran into Weatherford. The group yelled as they ran into each other. "Quiet." Weatherford said. "Thermal scans show they are near where you need to be. I brought in Ford and Hopper." He explained. Dustin looked over and saw Ford and Hopper setting up an M60. "Well, that should balance things." Suzie said as she took some more ammo from Weatherford. "I need time to get through." Suzie explained.

"Do they know we are even here?" Smiley asked. Weatherford shook his head. "They expected you to use the elevator." He said. "Good thinking." Smiley said to Dustin. Hopper growled at them. "This damn gun is heavy." Hopper announced. Dustin nodded and helped him with the gun.

The horde was pointing their weapons at the elevator. There were ten men standing around waiting for the elevator. "I sent a couple of guys to send the elevator up. Just going to keep have some fun." Hopper said as they hid behind a pair of walls leading to the elevators.

The elevator came up with a familiar ding and opened up. Four men entered quickly. Weatherford smiled as the elevator exploded when the claymore mines hidden inside went off and blew them up. Ford

and Smiley rushed forward and fired into the remaining men. “There are more, close to the big server room. We need to hurry.” Weatherford said as he led them away.

*El*

El walked forward, listening for the sounds of the large machine. She got closer as she heard his voice. “I know you are in there Miss Mayfield.” Brenner said. “Give me the child and Doctor Ryan. And I will make your deaths painless. You might even join my horde.” Brenner laughed. “Why don’t you leave them alone and face me?” El announced as she walked into the hallway. The massive robot turned and faced El, who was taking off her trench coat, leaving her in just a body suit with metal gauntlets.

“You know you can’t beat me right?” Brenner said. El merely glared at him. Brenner roared with fury and charged at El as she began running at him. El focused her powers into her fists and she leapt up and punched Brenner. The blow knocked him back as El pressed her attack. She used her powers to pull rebar out of the floor and wrap around his legs. El pulled up several tiles of floor and flung them at him. Brenner tried to fire at them but the marble tiles were too fast and he began getting pelted with the tiles.

Brenner fired his minigun and forced El to put up a barrier. As he kept her back, Brenner used one of his clamps to release himself from the rebar. Brenner then used his battering ram and knocked El back. Brenner turned around and saw the door was open.

He walked towards the door and looked inside. The closet was empty. He heard a beeping noise. Brenner looked up and saw C4 mounted on top of the frame. Before he could get his head out, the bomb exploded and dropped debris on top of him. Max looked on with a smirk while holding a detonator.

“That was for taking my son.” Max said as Nancy came around holding the still sleeping Harrison. “We need to get out of here.” She said. Max nodded as she ran down the hallway to see El dusting herself off. “Get to the security office. Mike and Jericho are there. I still need to handle this.” She said. The pair nodded and motioned for Will and Lucas to hurry up as Brenner dug himself out of the debris.

The explosion gave only slight damage, but even El could tell Brenner was getting angry. “Ready for more asshole?” El smirked.

### *Upstairs*

Suzie stuck close to her husband, keeping her laptop close by. She was considered the better hacker in the group, especially considering Hopper still had trouble operating a beeper. The group took out various horde groups as they made their way to the server room. Suzie strongly felt this was going to easy.

After dispatching two more soldiers, they finally found their way to the server room. It almost took up a whole floor, with massive servers all over the place. “He must run most of his operation from here.” Suzie said. “They are all stored in the central servers. Hopefully we can find something on this weird robot.” Dustin said as they headed for the center of the room. Ford looked up and pulled Suzie back as a sniper fired a shot at her.

Several snipers opened fire on them, the servers seemingly keeping them safe. The casings of the servers were made of steel. They all lowered themselves as Weatherford began firing. His hiding spot then lowered into the floor and left him momentarily exposed.

“He is toying with us” Ford declared. Hopper fired several rounds from his M60 and kills one of the snipers. More gun fire erupts as more men arrive. “Shit, we need to move.” Ford said as his gun shots were blocked by raising server towers. Ford reached for his radio.

### *Security Room*

Max and the others entered, along with Lopez and Jonathan dragging Dr. Ryan inside. They figured they would be safer away from the fight El was having with Brenner. Dr. Ryan was beginning to wake up.

“Well well well, someone is awake.” Jericho said as he grabbed Ryan by his shirt. “Now I have a few questions, and if you don’t fucking answer I will pull out your teeth!” Jericho roared. Lopez then pulled out a pair of pliers. Ryan was visibly shaken.

“How do I shut that fucking thing down.” Jericho demanded as Mike brought the robot on the screen. Ryan shook his head. “I wasn’t part of the development.” He said. Lopez reached for one of Ryan’s front teeth. “I SWEAR TO GOD I HAVE NO IDEA!” Ryan shouted. Jericho held him down as Lopez pulled the tooth. Ryan began screaming as blood came out of his mouth. “I believe you. I just hate your face.” Jericho said. Ryan began crying as Jericho smirked.

“Boss, we got problems. We need help!” Ford said over the radio. “We are pinned down.” He yelled. Jericho swore under his breath. “Wheeler, pull up the fourth-floor server room!” Jericho demanded. Mike quickly pulled it up and saw his men were pinned down with massive amounts of gun fire. The servers that protected them were lowering into the floor.

“Damnit. I need to get there.” Jericho said. Lopez stood up and Jericho nodded. “I’m coming to.” Nancy said. Jericho shook his head. “No, these are my men.” Jericho said. Nancy glared at him. “Well, I can shoot better than most of your men and quite frankly I don’t care for your machismo. Now I am coming with you and helping or I can kick your ass better than Mike did.” Nancy said. Jericho thought about it for a moment then shrugged his shoulders. “Fine, but I want everyone else getting ready to leave. And ask Dr. Ryan where we can shut this shit down.” He said indicating the sobbing doctor.

The group headed out as Max leaned over to Dr. Ryan. “Hey, crybaby, you heard the man. How do we stop this weird shit?” Max demanded. Ryan glared at her. “Your not nearly as scary as Jericho.” Ryan said. Max smirked and grabbed a small piece of C4 and shoved it into Ryan’s pants. “I will blow you up from your balls if you don’t tell me about this!” Max snarled. Ryan nodded his head.

“The Legion program is a prototype for one person to control multiple hosts. Dr. Brenner wanted it for a new form of military unit. I did the lobotomy’s myself. Shutting it down isn’t very simple since the central hub is locked from the inside and not really on the electrical network.” Ryan said quickly. Max smiled at him. “See? That wasn’t so hard.” She said sweetly.

“It may not be on the electrical network, but I bet it’s on a network interface.” Mike said. He pulled the radio out. “Suzie, if you can, try

and hack the servers and shut down their network connection to the legion program.” Mike said. “Sure, I’ll do that and dodge bullets!” Suzie yelled. “Cmon, you hacked the Pentagon, I am sure this is much easier,” Mike said.

“Ok, if I can get a password.” Suzie said. Mike looked to Dr. Ryan. “Eat me.” He said. Will reached for the detonator. “No, the password is Eat me.” Ryan explained. “Saverio came up with it.” He explained. Mike shook his head. “Of course he did. Did you get that Suzie?” Mike asked. “Affirmative. Now tell get these assholes off of me.” Suzie said.

Mike looked and saw he also had control of the servers. “Let’s see how they like it.” Mike said as he removed the hordes cover. He then gave more cover to Suzie and the others as they made their way to the central server. As he worked, Saverio came up on a monitor. He was wearing a headset. “I should have known you would be responsible. Let’s see if I can direct some men to you.” He said. “I think they might have some trouble asshole.” Mike said as he switched the monitor off.

### *Server room*

Several servers are put into a protective barrier around them as they reached the central server. Hopper using covering fire before he gets into the protective circle. “Okay, work fast. We need to hold out till Suzie does her magic.” Hopper said. Suzie rolled her eyes. “Its not magic. I am just using a program to tunnel into their system and shutting down several programs that use local intranet.” Suzie said as she hooked her laptop to the server. Ford and Hopper looked at her cross eyed.

The servers were starting to lower, but Mike was working furiously to fight Saverio’s attacks. One stopped half way and Hopper sat the M60 on the top and began firing into the group. Ford tossed a grenade and blew up a group behind cover, and also destroyed a few of the servers.

Suzie began working furiously. Typing in commands into her laptop to reach the program she needed. She saw she could shut down the intranet, but she discovered she could also overload the Project

Legion room. With a smirk she pulled up Saverio. “The fuck you want four eyes?” Saverio snarled into the screen.

“Oh, I just need to warn you. I made a shocking discovery.” Suzie said and entered the command.

### *LEGION ROOM*

Saverio had no idea what that bitch was talking about, until he heard parts of the room explode. He pulled off his helmet and saw the monitors exploding. Sending several scientists back as the monitors exploded. The helmet Saverio was using also overloaded with electricity. He threw it to the ground and ran out as the room caught fire. Several scientists tried to escape but Saverio locked them in. Price of doing business.

“I am going to kill that little bitch.” Saverio said as people banged on the doors.

### *Lobby*

The group was ambushed by several soldiers. True to Nancy’s word, she was a better shot than Jericho or Lopez. Jericho kept firing on them as they descended the stair well towards them. Within moments, the soldiers began to yell in pain as they all fell over. “Looks like they got rid of the riff raff.” Lopez said.

“Yea, but I doubt Saverio is out. We need to get him before he causes more damage.” Jericho said. The group made there way to the server room and found Suzie and Dustin hard at work getting information off of the servers, while Smiley and Ford were bandaging up Hopper.

“That hit bad?” Jericho asked. Hopper shook his head, he took a bullet to his leg. “Lucky shot. But I won’t be running track anytime soon.” Hopper said. Jericho smirked at him and picked up his M-60. “I think I shall borrow this.” Jericho said.

Loud booms rocked the area. “The hell is that?” Hopper asked. Jericho grimaced. “Might be El and Brenner throwing down.” Jericho said.

### *El*

The fight got more intense as they fought through the floor. El used her supercharge to knock Brenner back, while Brenner moved quick for a lumbering robot. El delivered a massive kick to Brenner, only to get grabbed by the leg and thrown into a surgical unit. El quickly got up and threw the bed at Brenner.

Brenner grabbed the bed and tossed it aside and fired his minigun. El floated out of the way and quickly entered surgical preparation. "Give up. I can track your every move." Brenner snarled. El smirked to herself. "TRACK THIS ASSHOLE!" El screamed and flung a sink at Brenner, bashing into his face. Brenner responded with sending his battering ram at her. El jumped and landed on the ram. She then ran up the arm and supercharging her foot, she delivered a massive kick to Brenner, knocking him back.

El ran off before Brenner could get his bearings. She had lured him far from where Mike and the others were, hoping they used this time to get off this floor. El doubted Mike would leave her. El decided to use this time to get any advice from her friends. "I have him distracted. Do you guys have something?" El asked into her radio.

"No, there are way to many files and I have no idea where to start." Suzie said into the comms. Strauss came on and gave direction. "Look into the Cyber program, Project Pickman." Strauss said. A moment later a squeal came on the radio. "Dusty found it. Its some kind of weird advanced tank?" Suzie questioned.

"No, it is the first of an army of bi-pedal soldiers that Brenner will be able to control. Project Legion and Pickman were to be a start for another stage of his plan." Strauss said. "I kind of figured what his endgame is, but care to enlighten us?" Jericho asked. Strauss took a deep breath before answering. "Take over the world." Strauss said. "Of course!" Dustin exclaimed.

"Any tips to shutting him down?" El asked. "Looks like its armor still doesn't respond well to high explosives, or heavy artillery like tank shells. I found an armory that should have everything we need." Suzie said. Mike also chimed in. "Yea, Max is heading there now to secure it. Lucas is tying up Dr. Ryan and is joining her." He said.

"Be careful. Sounds like I need to resume my chat with Brenner." El

said. She took a deep breath. Years of training made her more comfortable with her powers. No more nosebleeds. But she was getting exhausted. However, she still had a job to do.

Brenner was in front of an elevator, looking around for El. She smirked and supercharged her fists and took flight right at Brenner, slamming him into the elevator.

The frame of the elevator door was smashed as El floated back. Brenner slowly got up, then found cables wrapped around him. Brenner growled as he was pulled into the elevator. El concentrated and sent the elevator down the shaft. El knew the next floor own was the massive testing area. Brenner would be stuck down there for a while.

“Get those weapons quickly. We need to stop this.” El said to herself.

### *Max*

Max heard the loud crash from the elevator shaft. She was afraid she would run back into the monster. Max leaned back and felt her back into something. When she realized it was a person, she nearly screamed before a hand came to her mouth. Looking up, she saw it was Lucas. She pulled away and slapped him. “Don’t fucking scare me you stalker.” She said. Lucas smiled slightly. “Sorry, Mike ha me tie up that mad doctor. He felt you could use an extra hand with that armory.” He said. Max glared at him. “Yea, I hope we can find that damn thing. I don’t know how long El can hold out.” Max said. Lucas nodded as he led her to a set of stairs. “Don’t feel like dealing with that shit.” Lucas explained. Max merely nodded.

“Mike said the armory is down by the testing grounds.” Lucas said. “Do you hope that jackass tries to escape with Will around?” Max asked. Lucas snorted with laughter. They made there way down to a further underground facility. “I guess this is where El was made to test her powers.” Lucas mused as he looked down to a massive testing arena. It was sterile white and the size of a massive football field. Max and Lucas were at the mid section area, but above was what looked like a VIP viewing area.

“What do you bet that they trat this like a regular football game?”

Max mused. Lucas snorted with disgust. “Get me enough gasoline. I’ll burn this place to the ground.” Lucas said.

“Guess that’s why they kept an armory around here. Just in case El went off the deep end.” Max said as they neared a door marked ARMORY. “We’re here.” Lucas said opening the door. It was also a large room, filled with rocket launchers, mounted miniguns, grenade launchers, assault rifles, and various other weaponry. Lucas let out a low whistle. “Got enough firepower to take on Godzilla.” Lucas said. “Or an asshole robot.” Max said.

The room was very large, with several rows with racks of weapons. “Hey stalker. You ever just think what our lives would be like if we were normal?” Max asked as she picked up a shotgun and began loading it. “What I wouldn’t give to just not deal with some whack job government conspiracy. Just raise my son, deal with you and Mike being dorks. Ladies nights. Stuff like that. But I guess life is a little strange huh?” Max asked. When she got no response she looked around. “Stalker?” She called out.

“Well, one kind of stalker is here.” A voice growled. Max looked behind her and saw Lucas on the floor. He was not moving. Standing above him was Saverio. She remembered him when they had him prisoner back at the steel mill. His face was contorted with rage. Max readied the shotgun but before she could fire, Saverio ran down another aisle. Max ran after him, and saw him climb up to the top of the aisles. She ran after him and fired a round but he jumped away.

Max was looking around for him when suddenly the lights went out. “Shit. Can’t see.” Max muttered to herself. Saverio began laughing. “I was so glad to see you come down here. I never get to have any fun.” He snarled. She couldn’t tell where his voice was coming from. The room had an echo. She kept her shotgun trained as she walked around, knocking things over in the dark. She heard a noise close by but didn’t want to fire. She needed to confirm her shot.

She kept running around, till an arm came around her neck. She dropped her gun as she lost air. “I could kill you both. But I have a better use. Live bait is much better to catch bigger fish.” Saverio said as Max lost conciseness.

### *El*

She heard the rumbling as she looked down the elevator shaft. Brenner was climbing up really fast. El flew down and tackled him back into the testing area. She used the cables from the elevator to wrap around Brenner and pulled him out of the elevator shaft. She dragged him across the floor and threw him out of a window into the massive testing arena. El followed suit. Brenner used one of his utility arms to cut the cable off and he grabbed one of the cables to use as a whip. He lashed at her, but she used her powers to deflect it. But as she used her powers on the whip, Brenner used his battering ram on her and knocked her back into a wall. Brenner began laughing. "You are an impressive specimen. Years of us breaking your will you still kept your spunk and spirit. Maybe we should have killed those useless friends of yours. Maybe letting Saverio vivisect that little boyfriend of yours would not have my plans in disarray." Brenner snarled.

"A simple doll like you could never understand what I hope to accomplish. Guiding the world out of Hell. America, no THE WORLD, needs my guidance." Brenner declared. El stepped out of the hole in the wall. She pulled the sleeve off of her suit. She was bleeding from a cut above her eye. "You always thought you were God. But in reality you just a useless man who thinks so highly of himself." El said spitting out blood onto the floor. El could feel Brenner smiling at her. Even with the faceless feature of the robot, she knew he was smiling.

El lifted a piece of debris and flung it at Brenner, who effortlessly crushed it. "Your getting weaker Eleven. As your flesh weakens, my steel becomes stronger." Brenner snarled. El hated to agree with him, but she wasn't as strong as she was earlier in the night. She was sweating more and it had been a long time since she felt this powerless. She needed a recharge, but she had no time for rest. She had few options now.

### *Mike*

He watched on the monitors, his sleeping son on his lap. He never felt so helpless. "I need to do something." Mike growled to himself. Will watched the monitor with horror as well. "Well, hopefully Lucas

and Max found the armory. We can see about adding some firepower.” Will said picking up the radio. He looked over at Dr. Ryan, he stopped struggling a few minutes ago and was now just watching them. “Max, Lucas, you guys fin those guns?” Will asked.

“I found some guns all right. You should see the gains I made.” A voice came over the radio. Mike recognized Saverio’s voice. He grabbed the radio from Will. “You asshole, what did you do to Max and Lucas?” He demanded.

“Lucas and Max? I dunno, who they are. Hey, you two know who he is talking about?” Saverio asked. Suddenly a pair of muffled screams came over the radio. “Oh these must be Max and Lucas. My mistake.” He sneered. “You let them go now.” Mike demanded. Saverio laughed. “You want them? Come get them. I am in the VIP box of the training arena. Andi have a sweet view of your little girlfriend fighting the boss. I’ll be waiting.” Saverio said. The radio went dead after that.

“Tell me solutions” Mike said into the radio. Suzie answered. “Well, we could go down and face him?” She suggested, not sure of the answer. “I am sending men to secure the weapons. Saverio is mine.” Jericho said. Mike objected. “Those are my friends. I need to help.” He said. “I will get them back. You have other issues. Leave this to me.” Jericho said. Mike groaned in frustration. “Fine.” He said.

“I am heading back to you guys.” Nancy said. “I can help with the baby.” She said. Mike merely nodded as he handed Harrison over to Will. “Take care of him. I nee to help El.” Mike said to his friend. Will saw on the camera that El was starting to wear down. He nodded to his friend. “Be careful.” He said. As Mike walked out the door, he looked to Will. “When am I not?” He said as he closed the door.

Mike ran own to the staircase and made his way down to the testing arena. He looked down and saw El was no longer using her powers. She was now running from Brenner. Years of dealing with bullies made him realize she was being toyed with. He quickly ran till he reached the armory. Without thinking, Mike grabbed the door handle but stopped himself. “It’s a trap.” Mike said to himself. He looked and saw the door was indeed wired. He never needed to know how to disarm a trap. A voice came on the radio. “Mike, what the fuck are

you doing?" Nancy said. Mike didn't have time for this. "El needs my help." He said.

"So you think you can take on the giant robot with your can do attitude and some bullets?" She asked, increasingly getting angry. "No, my can o attitude and some grenades." Mike said. He could hear her growl. "Ok, I can't stop you. So I'll try not to have you die. I see your at the armory. I am guessing it's booby trapped?" She asked. Mike nodded. "Okay, how does the wire look?" Nancy asked.

"It looks slack." He said. Another voice came on. "Sloppy work, cut the wire." Jericho said. "Oh and I am sending Lopez to take Dr. Ryan to the Command Center. I may have more questions for him." He said. Mike pulled out a pair of plyers and cut the wire. He then turned the handle and shoved it forward while diving away, in case there were more surprises. When no explosion happened, Mike got up and walked in. The lights were out but he quickly found the switch. Inside, Mike saw signs of a fight. Looking around, Mike found what he was looking for. It was a six round grenade launcher and also an M4 with a grenade launcher. He put three additional magazines in a holster while loading the grenade launcher. "Hang on El, I'm coming." Mike said to himself.

Mike ran down and saw El was dazed. It looked like she took a hit from the robot's fist. He looked and saw the wall was at an angle, he could slide down. Quickly opening the window, he climbed out and slid down behind Brenner.

Brenner didn't notice Mike's arrival. He could hear Brenner taunt El. "I expected more fight from you Eleven. But don't worry. You won't die today. I will make you suffer for your insurrection." Brenner said picking her up by her neck. "I can still complete my plan. My body still has time for the transfer. I will keep you around to see my new world." Brenner said. Mike heard enough. "Hey asshole." Mike announced. Brenner looked behind himself without fully turning his body. He noticed a grenade fired right at his back. Brenner dropped El and fully turned to Mike.

"Mr. Wheeler. I was wondering when you would show up. She can watch you die." Brenner said.

## *Jericho*

He took the elevator with Nancy, Lopez and Smiley. While they got off on one floor, Jericho went another floor below. He kept the M60 at the ready. He also had his bowie knife as well. Jericho walked to the VIP area, using the signs as a guide. As he walked he could see Wheeler down in the arena. He groaned in frustration. “Kid, you really should just stop playing hero already.” Jericho said, not realizing he was doing the same.

He found the large double doors to the VIP lounge. The fact this place had a VIP lounge was very perverse to Jericho. He opened one of the doors and carefully walked inside. He looked around. It was a large space with two rows of seats for people to watch the testing, like it was some sports game. The rest of the space had a full bar, a couple of card tables. And a pool table.

On top of the pool table was Max and Lucas. Both tied up back to back with tape over their mouths. Both looked like they took a couple of beatings. Jericho quickly ran to them. Both of them looked at him and began muffling at him with wide eyes. Jericho stopped, realizing the warning. As he turned, he saw Saverio jump from behind the bar. Before he could fire, Saverio closed the distance and kicked the gun out of Jericho’s hand. “I wanted you last. Kill all your men and you come to be the last man standing.” He said.

Jericho swung at him, but Saverio deftly dodged the punch, ducked under him, punched Jericho in his knee, dropping Jericho. Saverio then jumped up and kicked Jericho in the face. “Every last one of you bitches underestimated me. Well, once I am done with you. I’ll have some fun with my new pals over there.” Saverio sai, winking at both Max and Lucas.

Jericho delivered an upper cut into Saverio’s jaw and knocked him back. Saverio recovered and bobbed under his guard and punched Jericho in the sides and chest. Jericho stepped back as Saverio delivered a punch to his face, then he went to the ground and kicked out Jericho’s feet.

“You should have sent your best men to fight me. You are out of shape. Your wounded from fighting that dumbass kid.” Saverio said,

picking up Jericho by his shirt. Jericho used his arms and separated Saverio's hands off of him. He then kicked Saverio back. He ran over and jumped up and punched Saverio in the face. Saverio looked at Jericho with a fierce look.

Saverio pulled out a curved knife from his belt. He slashed at Jericho's face and cut over Jericho's eye. He then drove the blade into Jericho's leg. Jericho roared with pain as he fell back with the blade in his leg. "Not so fucking tough are you?" Saverio said as he pulled the knife out of Jericho's leg. As he pulled the blade out, Jericho grabbed Saverio's hand, pulled out his bowie knife, and sliced off Saverio's hand.

Saverio howled in pain as blood poured out of his stump. Jericho grabbed Saverio's leg and broke his leg with his knee. Saverio began crawling away. "Look man, you understand following orders. I was just listening to my boss. I can help you out man. Just help me out please." Saverio said. Jericho picked up the M60 and pointed it at him. "SHUT THE FUCK UP!" Jericho shouted and he fired. Before long, Saverio was bloody paste on the floor.

Jericho felt exhausted. He wiped blood from his face. He walked to Max and Lucas, both were still struggling. Jericho untied them and Lucas moved to help him. "I'll be fine. Just we need to help Wheeler and El out." Jericho said.

"Yea but you need something for that leg." Lucas said. Jericho waved it off and fired at the window. "Gotta handle this." Jericho said. They all looked down and saw Mike was running under Brenner.

"Did you guys raid the armory yet?" Jericho said into the radio. Dustin answered. "Yea, we grabbed all the anti tank and a shit load of rocket launchers." He said. Jericho nodded; "Get into position." He said.

*Dr. Strauss*

Strauss saw Dr. Ryan being carried by Lopez and Ford. He was struggling against the bonds he had. "Is the battle still going on?" He asked. Lopez nodded. "Yea, there in the training arena. We are about to give support." Lopez said. Strauss nodded and picked up a bag. "I

will go see to something in the lab. It should be safe inside,” Strauss said. He then made his way down to the lab, walking with his cane and bag.

### *Mike and El*

Mike had one round in his grenade launcher, and two magazines left. El had moved away, recovering her strength. Mike didn’t know how well he could fare against a monster like Brenner. Mike fired the last round and hit Brenner’s leg. Brenner fell down and he fired a rocket at Mike. Mike dodged away as he missed getting blasted by the rocket. Mike got up just in time for Brenner to grab him. “I hate bugs like you.” Brenner said. He then activated an arc welder and moved it to Mike’s face. Mike grabbed the arm and rammed it into his arm that held the gatling gun. The arm partially came off and Mike was dropped to the ground. Mike ran away as the beast stomped around.

Mike fired several rounds at him, but the rounds were not damaging him. “Shit, need a miracle.” Mike said to himself. Brenner turned and marched to him. “HEY ASSHOLE!” Jericho shouted. Brenner and Mike looked up and saw a bloody Jericho at the VIP lounge, holding a massive gun. He fired at Brenner, rounds bouncing off of him. Mike ran off to El and the pair ran further away.

“Are you feeling better?” Mike asked. El shrugged. “We need to end this.” She said. Will got on the radio. “Hey, we have a shit load of explosives. Just need a way to fire at him.” Will said. El and Mike thought about it. “I have a plan. Get the stuff ready.” El said as she explained on the radio.

Brenner climbed up while being fired on by Jericho. It was slow going, but soon Jericho ran out of bullets. Brenner made his way to the window and came face to face with Jericho. “I had plans to kill you in an accident Mr. Jericho. But crushing your neck would be preferable.” Brenner said. “Yea, but you have a problem.” Jericho said, pulling out a detonator. Brenner saw the frame of the window was several blocks of C-4. “You really need to quit falling for that one.” Jericho said as he pushed the button. The explosion blasted the frame and Brenner fell down. He slid down and skidded to the center. Brenner stood up, growling about upstart mercenaries, when he looked up and saw several dozen rocket launchers, grenade

launchers, and other explosive weaponry floating in a dome around him.

El was on the other side of the dome, a sly grin on her face. With a twitch of her head, a small volley of explosives fired onto Brenner from all directions. He was also fired upon from the walk way from several men firing light machine guns at him. Most of Bravo Company was there aiming weapons. Mike was also there, holding an assault rifle. "This ends now." El said and with a twitch of her head, hundreds of rockets began firing at Brenner from all directions. Several machine gun blasts also fired down upon him.

What seemed like forever, all the rounds and rockets were spent and Brenner's robot form was busted. One of his legs was broken off and his secondary arms were blasted into pulp. He fell over and howled. The face plate opened up and the screen with Brenner's face came on. "I will not be stopped." He said. El glared at him and pulled the screen out, pulling out the controlling circuitry. The robot fell over in a heap.

### *Brenner*

Brenner found himself back in his body. He needed to escape somehow. He had a medical team, a loyal one, at his facility in the Rockies. He looked around for his wheelchair and looked on to see Dr. Strauss sitting in it. He had a small grin on his face.

"Hello Doctor." Strauss said. Brenner had a look of fear on his face. "I have waited for this day for many years. Eleven would have left you here to rot, but I think you and I have an appointment to keep." Strauss said getting up. He opened his coat and inside was several armed blocks of C-4. He smiled as Brenner tried to get out of his bed. Strauss grabbed him and held him close as he pressed the detonator.

The explosion was large, destroying the room, and the superconductor that Brenner used to power his machine. The chain reaction went off and began blasting the complex apart.

Suzie noticed the explosion. "Smiley, what the hell is going on?" She demanded. "It looks like the power grid has ruptured. This place is going to blow." Smiley said. "Okay, everyone get out of here, WE

ARE LEAVING!" Jericho commanded. The group began heading for the exits.

As everyone got out of the building, several massive explosions ripped the building apart. Soon the complex was engulfed in a massive explosion. The group looked on in amazement, when Nancy looked around. "Where the hell is Mike and El?" She asked. They all looked around then back to the burning husk. "Why the hell didn't they leave?" Max asked.

"No, they left" Weatherford said, looking through his rifle scope. Max grabbed the scope and looked where he was staring. Up in the sky, Mike was holding onto El, both deep into a passionate kiss in the sky.

They both lowered down slowly, The pair holding each other for dear life. "It's over." Mike declared. "Nobody is taking you ever again." He said. El looked up to him, tears in her eyes, smiling at his words.

"God damn, I can't handle this much sweetness." Hopper called from the trailer. El and Mike smiled at the old man. Max ran up to them, carrying Harrison in her arms. "You two are so stubborn." Max said. Harrison, who was now wide awake, looked at his father and giggled loudly. Mike smiled and took him from Max. El looked at the toddler curiously. He was also fascinated by the new person. "El, this is my son, Harrison. Little man, this is El." He said. The toddler looked to El and grinned at her. He then repeated the words. "El" while pointing at her. El smiled at the small one. The child reached for El who was unsure of what to do. Max and Mike smiled as they helped her hold the child, who decided to cling to his new friend.

"Hey this is all adorable and whimsical and all that shit, but I think the US Government is going to notice." Jericho said. Mike nodded and they all headed back to the vehicle. Heading back to Hawkins as the sun began to rise to a new day.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

One more chapter to go. I am ready to finish this, but it might be a couple weeks. I have a relative coming next week and well, i have like 5 relatives left. i got to spend time with them. But the next chapter won't

be nearly as long. Hopefully. I make no promises.

## 15. Chapter 14

### Notes for the Chapter:

I am so sorry this took forever. I had been working 70-80 hour weeks. I still am but I did not expect it to take this long.

### Chapter 14

The ride back to Hawkins was quiet. The only sounds came from Harrison asking his father several dozen questions about things. Mike smiles as the small child would point and ask “What that?” in his toddler voice. This time he pointed at Mike’s bruises.

“Well little man, your daddy played a little rough today.” He gently said to him. Harrison still looked confused. Mike smiled at the child as he decided to find El fascinating again. El was still unsure around the child. He climbed on her lap and just stared at her. El tried to smile at the small child but she was nervous.

Max walked up to her and claimed the child back. “Yea, he usually is shy as all hell. I would take it as a good sign he likes you.” She said. El shrugged. “I don’t have a lot of experience with kids.” She said. Max smiled at her. “Yea, you should have seen me when he was even smaller. I swear I almost killed Karen. Every five seconds she was criticizing me.” Max said. Mike shuddered at the memory.

Mike’s mother was excited to be a grandmother but hated the fact that it wasn’t proper. Mike and Karen had many shouting matches the first few months of Harrison’s life. Luckily after Ted privately told Karen to calm down and after a few heart to hearts with Max, did Karen start behaving like a normal person.

Harrison kept an interest in El, before snuggling with his mother. Max kept a slight death grip while she had a relaxed expression on her face. She was glad that her boy was home and the next asshole who tried was getting a closed casket funeral.

El looked over and saw Hopper resting, Suzie had already patched up his wounds. The bullets were in and out in non vital areas. El had been worried but she trusted Suzie to treat him. She walked over to him and saw him open his eyes at her.

"Hey there." Hopper said, a smile forming on his face. El smiled back at him. "Hey yourself." She said. Hopper moved out of the way so El could sit next to him. "Young lady, you have been out WAY past your curfew." Hopper said. El laughed. Hopper's face then became serious. "I never thought I would ever see you again. "Hopper said. El saw tears were welling up in his eyes.

El snuggled up to Hopper, careful not to agitate his wounds. Hopper wrapped an arm around her. "I can't even begin to imagine what you went through in there." Hopper said. El began feeling all the emotions she kept suppressed for the past fifteen years and began crying into his arms.

Mike watched them, feeling the sadness and relief come over the both of them. He felt the seat next to him get occupied and he looked over to see Jericho sitting next to him.

"You know this isn't over right?" He said. Mike nodded. He remembered the President authorized this mess. "I dunno what we are going to do." Mike said. Jericho leaned back, his leg was wrapped and the slash above his eye was stitched up. "If you know a pretty good lawyer and maybe some way to lay low, I got a plan." Jericho said. Mike smirked. "I might know a guy."

*October 5<sup>th</sup> 2001- a few months later- Washington DC*

A blue Camaro parked in the visitor spot outside the Pentagon. A man in a suit stepped out. He had brown wavy hair that seemed to glisten with the sun. He smirked as several women looked his way as he passed, heading into the visitor entrance for the Pentagon. He stopped by the receptionist and smiled to her.

She looked up, warmly smiled at the handsome man leaning on the desk. "May I help you sir?" She asked, her voice higher than normal. The man smiled. "William Hargrove, I have a meeting with General Fletcher." He said. The woman looked at her computer and checked

the appointment section. “He is expecting you, head through security.” She said, directing him to the extensive security protocols.

Billy mused that two months ago this wouldn’t be necessary, but since the events last month, even he had to admire the amount of security that sprung up overnight. Getting to Washington from California was a bit of a hassle by plane, so Billy got in his car and drove the whole way. His wife groaned at the idea of him driving, but Billy said he needed to get there without being noticed by a few interested parties.

He remembered in July he got a phone call in the night from Joyce Hopper about them finding El, and how they were going to rescue his nephew from those same dirtbags who took him. Billy wanted to fly down very quick to help, but a few hours later he got a call saying they were all safe and relatively unharmed. They did though, need his legal expertise. Billy flew to Indiana and interviewed the mercs and their prisoner, a disgraced doctor who helped with the experiments at Project Argus. Billy felt sick about what he read in the files they stole from them.

With the facility destroyed, they waited to see how long before agents would come to reclaim their weapon. Jericho’s contacts in the NSA though told them that they were in the dark. Brenner had been keeping people in the dark and did not want to alert people to his plans. Billy mused that the Government was glad he was dead. Jericho seemed to agree but they still couldn’t let their guard down. They still were looking to silence witnesses.

Billy was preparing to go to Washington, then the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> happened. It put the Government on high alert, and sent their troops to fight in Afghanistan. It bought them some breathing room. But a month later, Billy got into contact with someone who he could get the Government off their backs. He just needed a little incentive.

Walking to the office, he saw it was a special operations insignia on the wall. Before he could knock, the door opened and he was greeted by a tall Marine Corps. General. His hair was grey in a high and tight cut. He was wearing his Class A uniform, and he was annoyed at the visitor.

"You were expected twenty minutes ago Mr. Hargrove." Fletcher said. Billy flashed him a smile. "Sorry, but I was a little late, security and such." He said as he walked past the general. The general was annoyed at this arrogant lawyer stepping in before he was invited.

"Let's get down to business General." Billy said as he took a seat. Fletcher walked around and sat at his desk. "Yes, lets. I hope you appreciate that we have a war going on." He said. Billy smiled at the man. He then opened his briefcase and handed him a folder. "I know about Project Argus." Billy said. Fletcher looked up, shocked. "How do you know about that?" He demanded. "When you and your cronies authorized a strike in a small town and took a teenage girl." Billy said, a hard edge in his voice.

"That was authorized by the President." Fletcher countered. Billy smiled again. "Yes, I found that nice little authorization form. But Brenner is dead, and all that dirt he had on powerful people is no longer holding over them." Billy said. Fletcher felt his mouth go dry. "I also have Dr. Ryan. Did you know he sings very easily?" Billy said.

Fletcher looked around, he needed a drink and he walked to his cabinet and pulled out a glass and some bourbon. He quickly poured himself a glass. Brenner seemed to have everything under control, and with Fletcher's help, they were going to change things around. He saw his other gun and he grabbed it.

Whirling around, Fletcher found himself face to face with Billy, who grabbed his arm and slammed him to the ground, twisting the gun out of his hand. "You think I didn't know the gun was in there?" Billy asked. Fletcher looked at him with astonishment. "I have a friend who can look in your office. She warned me about that." He snarled.

"GUARDS, HELP ME!" Fletcher screamed. At that moment, several armed Marines entered the room. Billy got up and stood back, still smirking. "This man attacked me and is trying to blackmail me!" Fletcher declared while pointing at Billy. The guards looked at Billy then focused on Fletcher. "General Fletcher, we were given orders to place you under arrest." One of the guards said. Fletcher looked at the men in shock as they lifted him up and handcuffed him.

"This can't be happening. It went perfectly." Fletcher said as he was

escorted out. One of the guards walked up to Billy. “Thank you for keeping him busy.” The man said, shaking Billy’s hand. “I do love to serve my country.” He said with a smirk.

### *Hawkin’s- Hopper’s Cabin- 1 week later*

Mike sat on the recliner reading the newspaper. They had been in hiding for months, keeping themselves out of sight for the most part. Luckily the news of his manhunt was largely forgotten and he was glad for the peace and quiet of Hawkins.

El largely kept herself busy, relearning the world. Her hair grew back within a month of being in the cabin, she vowed to never let it get short ever again. Largely she was happy to find herself not in a sterile white lab.

The pair went on lots of nature walks, keeping to the old rules. The others were also in hiding, but in plain sight. Max was staying with her mother with Lucas, Will and Chad were living in the Mayor’s house, while Dustin and Suzie were keeping an eye on things in Indianapolis.

Jericho assured them that the blowback is being contained, but Mike still had the old paranoia in him. He was waiting for the other shoe to drop. Mike was reading about more security measures when a small hand tapped his leg.

Mike looked down and smiled as his son looked up at him. “Whats up buddy?” Mike asked his son. Harrison pointed to El’s room. “Need help” Harrison said. Mike smiled as he picked his son up and walked into her room.

El was sitting cross legged on her bed in deep meditation. Mike wondered what she did in these trances. Mike sat down at the end of the bed and Harrison climbed out of his grip and moved to sit with El.

In the few months they had been in hiding, Harrison grew attached to El. Despite being unsure of the small child, El began getting comfortable with him. It also helped she could make him fly with little effort. Harrison liked El, and Mike was glad for that. The two

still danced around whether they were together or not. Mostly due to the psychological strain El had been under for years.

Harrison climbed to El's face and kissed her cheek, making her get out of her meditation trance. She opened her eyes and saw Harrison's smiling face. "You are lucky you are adorable." El said as she lifted him with her mind. Harrison began giggling. "You know he does that just to get you to do that?" Mike asked teasingly. El smiled at the giggling boy. "Yea, but I find it to be a better use of my powers than spying on China." El said. Mike nodded as he moved to sit next to her.

"Find anything interesting?" He asked. El nodded. "Billy is on his way. He is getting Dad to come over here." El said. Mike nodded. Hopefully the hiding will end.

El lowered Harrison onto the bed and he crawled between them. El smiled and put her head on Mike's shoulder while Mike put his hand around her waist. El let out a content sigh. The months were great, especially the amount of time she got to spend catching up with her family. Hopper sometimes called the cabin to verify they were still there, almost like this was all a dream.

A knock on the door startled the pair as El used her powers to see outside. "It's Billy and Dad." She said. She flicked the door open as the group walked out of the room. "Hey kid." Hopper said pulling her into a hug. El smiled at the sight of her dad in his suit. Mike shook Billy's hand as he greeted the group.

"Okay, let's get down to business." Billy said as he sat down at the table while Mike made tea. Billy opened up his briefcase and pulled out several papers.

"The files Suzie took from that base were a huge help for us." Billy began. "I had a few meetings with NSA and CIA officials. From there, I had a few meetings with the White House. Brenner's intel and blackmail caused a lot of grief over the years. Secretly, several high level Government Officials were arrested. And finally, I got this from the Vice President." Billy said as he handed El a folder. El grabbed it and opened it. She was shocked by what she found. One was a birth certificate, declaring her Jane Hopper, daughter of Jim Hopper. The

other was a letter from the President declaring her a person and no longer property of the US Government. Finally, a check for one hundred million dollars, for pain and suffering.

Mike held onto El as she cried with joy. "Does this mean it's over?" Hopper asked. Billy nodded. "Anyone who had something to do with Brenner has been arrested, all files about Project Argus have been destroyed. You guys are free to live your lives." Billy said. Mike was also crying in joy. Billy looked over at Hopper and nodded. "Well, I am taking the munchkin for the night. I think you guys could use a break." Billy said hoisting Harrison over his shoulder. Hopper nodded as the man left with the toddler. "Yea, I think you two have a lot to talk about." Hopper said as he left the pair.

That evening, El and Mike sat on the couch, facing each other while they needed to know what to say. "I can't believe it's over." El said. Mike nodded. He was still half expecting Brenner to burst in telling them it was all a trap. El could read it on his face. "I know, I sometimes feel it to. But I know he is dead. And everything else has been cleaned up." El said. Mike nodded, but in his mind, he has been paranoid for fifteen years and that was just habit.

"What do we do now?" El asked. Mike smiled at her. "We take things one day at a time. Just try to rebuild our lives." Mike said. "Will you help me?" El asked. Mike smiled at her and nodded. "I will be there for you, forever if you want me." Mike said. El moved closer to him. "I kept holding hope forever. I missed everything about you, about us. Mike, I love you. I don't think I can truly love another the way I love you." El said. Mike was having a hard time speaking as tears came to him. "I love you to." Mike said and kissed her passionately. They held that until they came up for air. El smiled at him and the pair laid down on the couch, El wrapping her arms around his neck. "I just want to be close to you Mike. Hold me." El said. Mike complied as the pair laid down on the couch, just being in each other's company.

### *The next day- Waffle house*

Mike and El walked in, hand in hand and found the booth where Jericho was waiting. The wound above his eye left a scar but his leg wound healed fine. He was going to be back to work soon. "Hey love

birds. Enjoy your nesting?" Jericho said with a smile. Mike grinned back at him. "Just glad we could leave the nest." Mike said as the pair sat down at the booth. A waitress came and took their orders, with El ordering a massive stack of waffles. Jericho laughed at the waitress expression.

"Okay, so now that the work is done, and I collected my fee. It's about time I searched for greener pastures." Jericho said. Mike nodded, while was glad it was over, he was sad his new friend was off on more adventures. "What will you do now?" El asked. Jericho smiled. "Bravo Company still needs to work. Gotta get some new recruits. My little brother still needs care." He said. El nodded. "If he needs help, I can be there for him." El said. Jericho nodded.

"That's mighty kind of you. I might keep that in mind." Jericho said. Their order came in and they ate in peace.

"What will you do now?" Jericho asked as they finished. Mike and El looked at each other. "We are just taking things one day at a time now. But we talked about maybe staying here in Hawkins." El said. Jericho scoffed. "I spent way to long here. I can't wait to get out and back to work." Jericho said. Mike laughed. "Well, I am done with adventuring for a while." Mike said. Jericho nodded. "Yea, you just be a good parent. That's your adventure." Jericho said as he got up from the booth.

El got out and gave him a hug that Jericho returned. "I dunno how to thank you." She said. "Just keep living. Future is yours now." Jericho said. He looked to Mike and shook his hand. "You go back to being a boring nerd. I don't want to take you on again." Jericho said. Mike nodded. "Yea, hate to kick your ass again." Mike said. Jericho pointed a finger at him with a severe look. "We were interrupted." Jericho said.

Mike laughed and the group said their goodbyes. Jericho walking to the steel mill that was being used as their temporary headquarters. "You wouldn't mind living in Hawkins?" El asked. Mike nodded. "I met the best person ever here." He said looking at her. El smiled and the pair walked to the car, going to meet the others, and also to the rest of their lives.

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

I re read the chapter and decided this is not the end.  
I will write a new ending later but for now, this story  
isn't done.

## 16. Chapter 16

### Notes for the Chapter:

This is the final chapter. I can say i am satisfied with the ending this time. It's been a good journey with this story.

*Four years later*

Jane “El” Wheeler collapsed in her recliner, exhausted after the long day she had. First, her two year old daughter was cranky and would not cooperate with anything. Then her playdate cancelled at the last minute (so last minute she was in the damn driveway) and finally she ran herself ragged getting the house cleaned.

El looked around her home and looked to see if she had any clutter from her tornado of a child sent everywhere. Despite not having powers, she sure could put toys in funny places. Her husband once said he found a diaper in a place she wouldn’t believe. Looking at the play mat, she saw her daughter, Terry, was sound asleep. Carefully picking her up with her mind, El moved her into her bed and quietly put a blanket around her. She smiled at the sleeping child and kept thinking of all the ways she was like her parents.

She had El’s eyes, and also her hair. She did have her father’s freckles and the doctor said she might be as tall as Mike. El smiled at her sleeping form, then it happened.

She was back in the white sterile room. The window from her daughter’s room was now a one way mirror. Her daughter was now a shaved new experiment, her arm said 013.

El shook her head and found herself back in reality. Every once in a while it happens. She still can’t believe she is free from the lab. El decided to try and relax a bit, and later call Dr. Carmichael. The NSA recommended him as a good therapist “in the know” so El could talk about her experiences. This came about when El was watching tv and freaked out when the cop show she was watching had an interrogation room.

One way El relaxed, was a photo book that Will and Jonathan made for her. It was mostly of memories she missed out on. One favorite of hers was Mike and Max after Harrison was born. Max's head was wrapped in a towel and she looked exhausted while holding the infant. He was eight now and a little rough houser, just like his mom. The next page was Max's second child, another boy named Jackson. Lucas was there, and he had a black eye. In his panic to get to the delivery room, he ran into a door. Max loved the story.

The next photo was Hopper's last day as mayor. She couldn't fault him for finally stepping down. He hated the public life and more than one occasion he threw out a reporter who asked questions about El that he considered to be inappropriate.

Their rather large family kept growing over the past four years. Nancy and Jonathan were expecting a girl in a few months, while last month Dustin called excited that Suzie was expecting. It made sense that they were going to settle down now that the bad guys were taken care of.

Sometimes the government sent people to ask for help. Finding such and such terrorists on their watch lists. El laughed when she demanded ten million for each one. When one tried to use national security as an excuse, El merely glared at him till he left. That one was more hormones from being pregnant but still, El deserved the right to be left in peace.

Jericho occasionally asked for help, but her prices for him were a lot better. If the NSA just hired him to hunt those terrorists, she would probably be more accommodating, but even Jericho had his limits on jobs. Last she spoke to him, he moved his siblings to another state. El wished them all the best.

Will and Chad were still living together, no plans for marriage. Will frequently said he doesn't need a piece of paper saying he loves Chad. Both were frequent at the house helping her out with Terry.

A small cry alerted El to her daughter waking up. She smiled to herself and she made her way upstairs. When she got to her daughter's room, she was sitting up looking confused and having the just woken up face. El smiled as her daughter laughed when she

entered the room.

“Come here baby, lets make you some lunch.” El said as she picked up the small girl. “Tato babies?” The toddler asked. El laughed. “Yes, we will have potato babies.” El said as she carried her down the stairs. When she and Mike were making tater tots one time, El remarked that their full name is potato babies. After that it stuck. Legend tells the school cafeteria calls them that.

She sat her daughter in a play area so she could safely cook the food she and her daughter would share for a while. El passed a photo on the fridge, she briefly looked at it. It was Mike after he got his teaching certificate. Right now Mike teaches at Hawkins Middle School as the science teacher. He isn’t as popular as the gym teacher but he does enjoy his work.

While El was cooking, the door opened, El looked and saw an exhausted Mike walk inside. Terry happily squealed when she saw her dad enter. “DADDY” She yelled. Mike smiled as he picked her up and the small child attacked herself to him. “Your home early.” El said as Mike walked in the kitchen. “Short day today. Brought my paperwork to do here instead.” Mike said as he kissed her.

“Well, I am glad you are here, you can keep that one entertained.” El said pointing to the tiny child attached to Mike’s neck. Mike nodded as he carried her out to play with her. El smiled as she continued her work, loving the sounds of laughter coming from the living room.

The family laid on the floor, a tv show on while they had a large pile of potato babies between the two parents. Terry would nibble on some before playing with a toy. “Okay, so the summer months are coming up. Any idea where you want to go?” Mike asked. El thought about it. The pair vowed to go vacationing whenever possible. For Christmas, they went to Vancouver. El had a framed photo of Terry excited to see snow.

“I talked with Max and she keeps talking about California. But not the big cities like L.A. or San Francisco. Hell I think she wants a group vacation.” El said. Mike smiled and nodded. “I’ll run it by Lucas. He was thinking Oregon, or Louisiana.” Mike said. El happily nodded. She was glad she had time to see new places, finally enjoy

life.

That night, once they put Terry to bed, after much fighting, the pair sat down on their couch. Both were holding hands while also relaxing from the ordeal of putting their child down. El looked over and saw Mike just staring at her with a smile on his face.

The past four years had been great on the couple. It took two years but they were married and had a baby on the way, like in a dream. El returned his smile and moved closer to him. She then straddled his lap and gave him a passionate kiss. As she kissed him, she played with his hair while Mike had hands on her waist and lower back.

Some time later, both were on the floor of their living room, clothes strewn about, both in a blanket they kept on the top of their couch. El was curled up to her husband as he held onto her. "I love you." El said to him. Mike looked down and kissed her forehead. "I love you too. And I am not losing you again." Mike said. The pair cuddled together, finally done with the day.

THE END

**Notes for the Chapter:**

in the words of a very famous pig. Thats all folks! I remember the original idea for this was actually two chapters long. It kind of grew and blew up from there. Jericho was the main villain originally, then i started liking his backstory. Honestly the villain Saverio came from my former boss who gave me nothing but grief. I hope you all enjoyed reading this as much as i did writing it.

**Author's Note:**

What do you think? Please read and review, I would love some feedback.